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Freeman sc.

Sir Thomas More

LIVES

OF

BRITISH STATESMEN.

SIR THOMAS MORE.

TOWARDS the close of the fifteenth century, those contests for the sovereignty, which had so long distracted England, and obstructed her improvement, were, by the union of the rival families, brought at length to a termination. The marriage of Henry VII. with Elizabeth, the daughter of Edward, did not, indeed, produce that complete and cordial harmony between all parties, which might have been expected. That monarch, haughty, selfish, and intensely jealous of his authority, still recollected that, as heir to the house of Lancaster, he held the throne by a very doubtful claim ; and strove, by treating his wife with neglect, and the partisans of her family with harshness, to efface from the public mind the impression of her superior title. He

observe them in the more private intercourse of life ; to follow them into their families and closets ; and to discover how the men, who govern empires, conduct themselves amidst the cares and duties which are common to the humble and the exalted.

Nor is our curiosity alone interested by such information. To those who prepare to tread the same paths, and to gratify their ambition in the discharge of public functions, the progress and transactions of their illustrious predecessors must be the volume in which they are to read the most important lessons. But it is not the statesman alone who is called on to observe the results of political experience : in this country, where public opinion is possessed of so much sway, the voice even of private individuals may have some influence on the national councils.

The moral lessons afforded by the career of statesmen demand not less attention. Every one is interested to learn, from such eminent examples, that the lustre of the highest station is derived from the same virtues as those which embellish pri-

vate life ; and that happiness is most attainable, as well as most secure, when our condition excites not the jealous passions of mankind.

Such are the views which have guided the Author in delineating the Lives of British Statesmen. He has been anxious to derive his information from the most authentic sources ; and to exhibit virtues and defects equally without exaggeration or diminution. He has avoided many opportunities of discussion, where the result did not seem of importance to his immediate object ; but he has occasionally attempted, in the illustration of his subject, to throw light on some obscure or disputed parts of history. He has endeavoured to select the Lives from periods sufficiently distinct to prevent a repetition of the same political transactions ; yet sufficiently connected, to form a chain of history without considerable interruptions.

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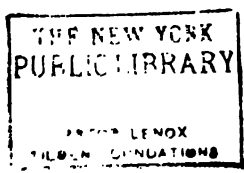
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ruled thus rather as the head of a party than as the common sovereign of his people ; yet any open discontents, to which this perverse policy gave rise, were quickly subdued by his sagacity and vigour. On the slightest appearance of insurrection, he was ever ready to march out against his enemies ; and if he delayed, on the first opportunity, to give them battle, it was only when he found that his conquest would be rendered more easy by their increasing straits, and ripening dissensions. Under this vigorous administration, England began to enjoy a tranquillity to which she had long been a stranger : and although the people suffered grievously from the oppressive exactions of their monarch, yet, as all disturbers of the public peace were quickly and severely punished, the internal intercourse of the kingdom became less interrupted ; and industry, as usual, increased with the security of persons and property.

Various circumstances occurred, during the course of this reign, to turn the activity of mankind from bloodshed and devastation, to pursuits more interesting and generous. The continental monarchs also had succeeded in extending their authority over all classes of their subjects, and in establishing governments, which, although rude and arbitrary, were far preferable to the turbulent anarchy of the feudal institutions. Their subjects, thus prevented from expending their energy in

mutual destruction, began to turn their attention to pursuits compatible with good order and regular government. Excited by the success of the Hanse towns and the Italian republics, which had hitherto acted as the carriers of Europe, and acquired vast wealth by their traffic, the other maritime nations began eagerly to aspire after a portion of these advantages ; and our countrymen, though at first retarded by the want of capital and skill, became initiated in that maritime trade for which nature has so remarkably adapted our situation. The progress of commerce, the improvement of agriculture, and the introduction of manufactures, were indeed slow and interrupted ; yet they habituated the people to the occupations of peace, and taught them to look for gratification in arts hitherto unknown. The more restless spirits, who felt no relish for tranquil pursuits, or whose eagerness could not wait the slow returns of industry, soon found ample room for their exertions, without disturbing the public peace, when the enterprises of the Portuguese and Spaniards, aided by the recent discovery of the compass, opened a vast field to adventurers in the East Indies and America.

At this period, when the human mind, awakened from the long slumber of the dark ages, began to exert extraordinary activity, a portion of the more affluent classes directed their attention to the pursuits which adorn, while they improve mankind.

Literature, which had already made considerable progress in Italy, began to be eagerly prosecuted throughout Europe ; and England soon promised to rival her more enlightened neighbours. It is from this era that individuals, as well as society in general, become interesting, owing, not more to the greater diversity and importance of their pursuits, than to the more complete and authentic records, in which, from the progress of literature, aided by the discovery of printing, their characters and transactions are preserved. Of the most important events in the preceding part of English history, and of the characters even of her monarchs, posterity has received only a faint outline, which succeeding historians, from their conjectures, or from traditions scarcely more authentic, have endeavoured to complete and embellish. But from the age of Henry VII. we are furnished with such authentic memorials even of individual statesmen, as enable us, without transgressing the known bounds of truth, to give satisfactory views, not only of their more prominent transactions, but of their manners, their opinions, and the motives which guided their conduct.

Birth and
parentage.

Among the statesmen who appeared at this remarkable period, Thomas More, from his talents, his acquirements, and the affecting vicissitudes of his fortune, most strongly attracted the attention of his contemporaries. He was born in Milk Street,

London, in 1480, five years before the accession of Henry VII. to the throne. His father, Sir John More, one of the Judges of the Court of King's Bench, a man of acute wit and sound understanding, took due precautions that the early indications of genius in his son should not languish for want of cultivation. In the first rudiments of education Education, he was instructed at a free grammar-school in Threadneedle Street, a seminary of considerable eminence, but affording means of improvement very unequal to what, in the present times, may be procured at a grammar-school of reputation. The elements of the Latin language were taught, but the pupils, instead of forming an acquaintance with the elegant authors of Rome, had in their hands only the dull and barbarous treatises of the schoolmen; and while their taste was thus early depraved, that superstition which held the place of religion, and that sophistry which usurped the name of knowledge, clouded their imaginations, and perverted their understandings. A more elegant literature had dawned on the Continent, but its first rays had as yet scarcely reached England.

As a further step in his education, More was afterwards placed in the family of Cardinal Morton. with Cardinal Morton. In consequence of the form into which society was thrown by the feudal institutions, the only road by which men of inferior rank could hope to reach distinction, was the favour of the great proprietors

in land, the chief ecclesiastics, and the principal officers of state. In their families, also, the politeness, elegance, and knowledge of the age were to be found : for while there was no middle rank of respectability, and the bulk of the community laboured under poverty and ignorance, the patronage of the great was necessarily courted by men of learning, as their only resource ; and distinguished scholars had a ready access to the tables of persons of condition, at a period when the possession of learning was so rare. At the same time, the internal economy of a great man's family, resembling, on a smaller scale, that of the monarch, was the proper school for acquiring the manners most conducive to success at court. Persons of good condition were consequently eager to place their sons in the families of the great, as the surest road to fortune. In this station, it was not accounted degrading to submit even to menial offices ; while the greatest barons of the realm were proud to officiate as stewards, cupbearers, carvers to the monarch, a youth of good family could wait at the table, or carry the train of a man of high condition, without any loss of dignity. The patronage of the great man being naturally secured to those who had acted as his inmates and retainers, admission into the families of the principal officers of state, who had preferment most directly in their power, was particularly courted. All these advantages were hap-

pily united in the situation of More, since his patron, who held the rank of cardinal in the church, was at once primate, chancellor, and the confidential minister of the king.

More soon attracted particular notice among the Cardinal's retinue, not more by the gracefulness of his person and address, than by his ready flow of wit and the perpetual sprightliness of his temper. At this early age he was accustomed, we are told, to step in among the players who acted, during holidays, at the Cardinal's palace ; and undertaking, without any previous study, a part imagined by himself, to support it with a liveliness and ingenuity which excited the admiration of the hearers.* In that age plays were neither composed nor acted in the regular manner which a more refined taste has since introduced : they consisted chiefly of such contests of wit and drollery, as we occasionally meet with in Shakespeare ; and the player was more frequently employed in sporting his own humour, than in reciting the words of an author. But these entertainments, if rude and barbarous when compared with the regular drama, were better calculated to sharpen the wit of the performers, and give them a peculiar readiness of humour. On More, the share which he took in them seems

* More's Life, by his son-in-law, William Roper, edited by Thomas Hearne, 1716, p. 3.

to have had effects both striking and permanent ; for in readiness of reply, and in the extraordinary facility of his expression, whether conversing or haranguing, he was accounted superior to all his contemporaries.

The Cardinal, a man of an acute and penetrating mind, charmed with the vivacity and promptitude of More, solicitously pointed him out to the nobility who frequented his house, as a boy of extraordinary promise. " This child here waiting at table," he would say, " whosoever shall live to see it, will prove a marvellous man." * Such prophecies from a man of Morton's rank and experience, as they could not fail to produce a strong impression on More, probably contributed to stimulate those exertions by which they were realized. The person, the wisdom, the talents, and worth of the Cardinal, through life a favourite topic with his ward, are thus introduced in his principal performance : " He was a man not more venerable for the high dignities which he held, than for his wisdom and virtue. His person, of the middling size, still retained its vigour to a late old age : his countenance excited rather reverence than awe ; and although grave in his demeanour, he was never difficult of access. To discover what presence of mind was possessed by those who solicited his pa-

* Roper's Life of More, p. 3.

tronage, he was accustomed to give them a harsh and repulsive, yet not insulting, reception; and such as, without petulance, gave indications of a ready wit and firm temper, he delighted to promote, as men of kindred minds to his own. To a polished and energetic eloquence, he joined great knowledge in the laws, uncommon genius, and a memory which, naturally strong, and cultivated with indefatigable diligence, had become altogether extraordinary. Having, at a very early age, been transferred from school to court, employed, from that time forward, in the most important affairs, and perpetually subjected to the vicissitudes of fortune, his wisdom and experience, acquired amidst many and great dangers, was relied on with implicit confidence by his sovereign, and entrusted with the chief direction of the government.” * Listening daily to the conversation, and observing the conduct of such a personage, More naturally acquired more extensive views of men and things than any other course of education could, in that backward age, have supplied. †

* *Utopia*, p. 60. edit. Oxon. 1663.

† Previous to the ready and general access to information, which the art of printing, by multiplying the copies of books, has afforded, the chief means which the young could employ to accelerate their progress in the acquisition of knowledge was by attaching themselves to some wise and learned man, and listening with diligence to his discourses and conversation. Such was the method of

1497.
At Oxford ;

At the age of seventeen, being sent, at the instance of his zealous patron, the Cardinal,* to Oxford, where a better taste in literature had lately been introduced, he had there the advantage of attending the lectures on Greek and Latin of Grocyn and Linacre, two eminent scholars. Captivated with these studies, which opened to his view such treasures of refinement and learning, he prosecuted them with indefatigable vigour, and soon discovered his proficiency by translations from the classics, and epigrams in the learned languages. But in this agreeable path his progress was speedily interrupted. His father, having destined him for his own profession, looked upon elegant learning with a feeling not uncommon even in our days, as not only unnecessary to a barrister, but even inconsistent with great proficiency in the knowledge of law. Considering it, therefore, his duty to dis-

education practised in Athens, where we find every young man ambitious of instruction a constant attendant, both in public and private, on Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or some other teacher distinguished for his acquirements. At Rome a similar course was pursued ; and we thus find Cicero describing his early education : “ Ego autem à patre ita eram deductus ad Scævola, sumptâ virili togâ, ut, quoad possem, et mihi liceret, à senis latere nunquam discederem. Ita multa ab eo prudenter disputata, multa etiâ breviter et commode dicta, memoriæ mandabam : fierique studebam ejus prudentia doctior.” Lælius, sive de Amicitia.

* More's Life, by his great-grandson, Thomas More, edit. 1726. p. 9.

courage the propensity of his son towards pursuits which might obstruct his future fortune, he determined, as the most effectual method, to make his allowances so scanty, that nothing could be spared from them to procure instruction in his favourite studies.* This act of parsimony, although, on that account, extremely mortifying to him, was attended, as he afterwards acknowledged, with beneficial effects, in restraining him from those dissolute companions and habits to which so many youths entrusted with a lavish command of money owe the ruin of their studies, their health, and their morals. His uncommon industry, however, still compensated the want of opportunities; and he would willingly have devoted his life to pursuits in which he found so much gratification, had not the displeasure of a father, whom he tenderly loved and respected, compelled him to give another direction to his exertions.

* *Erasm. Epist. 447. ad Huttenium.* “*Juvenis ad Græcas literas sese applicuit, adeo non opitulante patre, viro alioque prudenti, proboque, ut ea conantem omni subsidio destitueret; ac pene pro abdicatione haberet, quod a patriis studiis desciscere videretur.*” Erasmus is very angry that the attention of More was thus directed from literary pursuits, and often takes occasion to wreak his resentment on what he accounted the barbarous profession of the law. He calls it “*professio a veris literis alienissima:*” he speaks with great contempt of the English laws, “*quibus nihil illiteratius;*” and says, in excuse for More’s aversion to the profession, “*Ab hoc cum non injuria abhorreret adolescentis ingenium, melioribus rebus natum,*” &c.

1493.
At Lincoln's
Inn.

After having passed two years at Oxford, he removed first to New Inn, and afterwards to Lincoln's Inn; to prosecute the study of law. But although he neglected not the requisite preparations for this profession, he entered upon it with reluctance; for, besides his propensity to letters, there were other circumstances which gave a different bent to his inclinations. His mind, naturally susceptible and ardent, had been early tinctured with sentiments of devotion; nor had it wholly escaped that degrading superstition, which the defects of his more early education, and the conversation of illiterate companions, naturally communicated. Subsequently his acquaintance with the authors of better times, joined to a disposition full of humanity, had imparted liberality to his opinions, had disposed him to censure the vices of the clergy, and to jest with many absurdities of the church of Rome. Still, however, some prejudices of education had taken too firm a hold of his mind to be eradicated. Impressed with the efficacy of those austerities, on which so much reliance was placed in that age, he perpetually mortified himself with watching and fasting, and used to wear a hair shirt next his skin, a practice which, even in his highest exaltation, he never wholly relinquished. Every Friday, and also on high fasting days, he subjected himself to the discipline of a hard knotted cord; and even when he indulged in what he accounted a night of repose, he

was accustomed to lie on a bench, or on the bare ground, with a log under his head, allowing himself at most only four or five hours of sleep. He took lodgings near the Charter-house, among the Carthusians, an order remarkable for the excess of their austerities; and here, during four years, he continued to perform a rigid course of mortification.*

In the meantime, he diligently attended the preaching of Dean Colet, whom he had chosen as his confessor; a man of talents, and an enemy to superstition, but of a remarkably austere temper, and thoroughly convinced that the unruly passions of the human frame require to be subdued by incessant severities. The object which More had in view, by this course of discipline and instruction, was to prepare himself for entering the rigid order of St Francis. Besides, however, the authority of his father, which strongly opposed this design, he was apprehensive of being unguardedly led into irregularities by the warmth of his temperament; and, being too conscientious to follow the example of some of the Romish clergy, he resolved to turn his views again to a profession in which the absurd prohibition of marriage did not counteract the intentions of nature. †

* Roper, p. 3. More, p. 15.

† Erasm. Epist. 447. "Neque quicquam obstat quo minus sese huic vitæ generi addiceret, nisi quod uxoris desiderium non

Appearance
at the Bar ;

During this course of monkish austerities, incompatible as it may appear with worldly business or the pleasures of taste, he does not seem to have relaxed either his legal studies or literary pursuits ; and no sooner did he appear at the bar, than he began to practise with flattering prospects. He had already attracted much notice by public lectures on St Augustine's work *De Civitate Dei*. These lectures are said to have been extremely rational, seldom occupied with obscure theological discussions, but directed chiefly to explain the more important principles of morals, and to elucidate historical difficulties. Their eloquence and learning were such as to draw together crowded audiences ; and even aged priests were not ashamed to receive instruction from a youth and a layman. * With peculiar satisfaction he observed among his hearers the learned Grocyn, his respected master at Oxford ; and the reputation here acquired procured him the office of law-reader at Furnival's Inn, where he still farther increased the fame of his abilities. In the present age, it may seem strange that his progress at the bar should have been for-

posset excutere. Maluit igitur maritus esse castus, quam sacerdos impurus." Erasmus says in the same epistle, "*Cum ætas ferret, non abhorruit a puellarum amoribus, sed citra infamiam ; et sic ut oblati magis frueretur quam captatis, et animo mutuo caperetur potius quam coitu.*"

* *Erasm. Epist. 447. More, p. 16. Stapleton, p. 161.*

warded by reading lectures on one of the Fathers; * but, in his time, the professions of the law and church were by no means so accurately discriminated. The influence still retained by the ecclesiastical courts rendered all churchmen in some degree lawyers; and various important offices in the secular courts were generally occupied by ecclesiastics. In the court of chancery, which in so many instances controlled the judicatures at common law, the twelve masters, including the master of the rolls, were commonly doctors of the civil law; † and the office of chancellor, then as now the highest legal station in England, had for some reigns been invariably occupied by dignitaries of the church.

Having now resolved to devote himself to secular employments, he began to form a plan of life which might enable him to combine the fatigues of business with the recreation of literature. Among the illustrious characters whose example excited his emulation, while it directed his course, his notice was particularly attracted by Picus, the celebrated Prince of Mirandula. To render his countrymen partakers of the instruction which he had derived from the actions and writings of this accomplished

* These lectures on St Augustine were as entirely theological as the Boylean at present, and were delivered in the church of St Lawrence, Old Jewry.

† Blackstone, B. III. c. 27.

scholar, and generous patron of literature, he wrote his life, and, along with it, published his twelve precepts, with many of his learned and eloquent letters.*

1503.
In the House
of Com-
mons ;

Before he had attained his twenty-third year, More was chosen a member of the House of Commons, a station, however, which at that time had attained a very small share of its present dignity and importance. The sanguinary and incessant contests between the houses of York and Lancaster, by rendering it necessary for each successive possessor of the throne to arm himself with the powers of a military despot, had greatly checked the rising independence of the Commons. Henry VII. who had acquired his crown by conquest, and who looked with suspicion and dread on the slightest interference with his authority, was particularly averse to bring before them any of his political measures. Their acknowledged right of imposing all taxes on the people, obliged him, indeed, to assemble them when he stood in want of pecuniary supplies ; and he was also sufficiently willing to obtain their sanction for, and devolve on them a part of, the odium of his numerous attainders and confiscations. But no sooner were these purposes served, than the Commons were dismissed, as a weapon too dangerous to be long kept out of the scabbard. In such

* Stapleton, p. 162. More, p. 19.

a state of things, almost the only field for oratory which that house afforded, was either in opposing the requisitions of the crown for subsidies, or in proposing those conditions with which the Commons sometimes clogged their pecuniary grants. But, in a reign when perpetual conspiracies afforded such ready pretexts for accusation, either of these was a dangerous attempt. Besides, the duration of parliaments was too short and uncertain, and their authority too circumscribed, to afford scope for any scheme of ambition. The House of Commons was not then the road to distinction and power; no member could hope, by a successful opposition to the measures of the crown, to force himself into administration; and, under a monarch impatient of opposition, and almost unlimited in power, the strenuous and eloquent patriot, instead of advancing his fortunes, exposed his person and property to imminent danger. Hence, a seat in the House of Commons being often avoided as a source not only of expence, but of vexation and peril, was obtained with little difficulty by a man anywise distinguished.

But, in spite of the disadvantages which at that ^{In opposi-} period attended a patriotic commoner, More discharged the trust reposed in him with fidelity and courage. Henry having required from his parliament a large contribution for the marriage of his eldest daughter with the King of Scotland, the de-

mand, whether from its magnitude, or the purpose to which it was to be applied, proved extremely unpopular among the Commons. Yet, from a just dread of the king's resentment, the measure seemed likely to pass in silence ; when More, incapable of being deterred by any sense of personal danger from executing what he accounted his duty, boldly stood forward to oppose the requisition ; and, reasoning with such eloquence and strength of argument as to rouse the courage of his colleagues, finally procured its rejection.*

This display of patriotism and fortitude, at his first entrance into public life, while it greatly increased his reputation, seemed to threaten the ruin of his prospects ; for Henry could not hear, without indignation, that his avarice had been disappointed, and his authority thwarted, at the instigation of a youth distinguished by no rank or hereditary influence. The want of fortune, however, proved the safety of the young patriot ; for it was a maxim with Henry to make his revenge, if possible, subservient to his avarice ; and, as the present object of his resentment had nothing to lose, the king was more averse to risk a public clamour, by directly violating the privileges of the Commons. But that More might be sensible of his displeasure, and deterred from a similar opposition in future, he

* Roper, p. 4. Stapleton, p. 181.

contrived to fasten some groundless accusation on his father, Sir John More, and caused him to be shut up in the Tower, till he purchased his liberty, by paying for his pretended offence a fine of a hundred pounds. * Nor was Henry of a temper to be satisfied with this indirect revenge ; and More, although he dexterously eluded the arts practised to draw from him confessions which might afford a colour for his accusation, yet well knew the folly of openly contending with his implacable ruler. His first thoughts were to avoid the danger by going abroad ; and with that view he studied the French language ; but although he laid aside this intention, he found it necessary to give up his practice at the bar, and live in complete retirement. †

This seclusion, while it threw a cloud over the Retirement. dawn of his fortunes, was far from proving distasteful or irksome. Resuming with eagerness those elegant studies in which he had formerly made great proficiency, and applying himself also to history, mathematics, and in his leisure hours to music, he rivetted his early attachment to such pursuits, and greatly extended the range of his attainments. It is probably to this interval of retirement

* Equal, if we allow for the depreciation of money, to about eight hundred pounds in the present day.

† Roper, p. 4. More, p. 36.

and study that we are, in a considerable degree, to ascribe his subsequent eminence in literature ; for his first entrance at the bar took place at so early a period, before his taste or his habits could be fully formed, that, had he continued, without interruption, engaged in his profession, we should have been in danger of losing, in the laborious man of business, the scholar, the poet, and the philosopher.

1509.
Reappear-
ance and
success at
the Bar.

The death of Henry VII. which happened about six years afterwards, enabling him to resume his practice at the bar, his talents and acquirements soon raised him to eminent distinction. His application to the immediate objects of his profession had been sufficient to procure him a profound knowledge of the laws of his country, while his extensive general information, his acquaintance with elegant literature, and his early habits of declaiming, gave to his eloquence an energy and attraction which never failed to produce a powerful impression. His abilities were, therefore, no sooner known to the public, than he began to be eagerly consulted and retained in many important causes ; and in his practice and gains he equalled soon the most popular of his competitors ; * a striking instance, yet by no means so rare as is generally imagined,

* Erasm. Epist. 447.

of success at the bar promoted by qualifications with which it is by many deemed incompatible. *

In his professional conduct various circumstances are recorded which singularly illustrate his moral delicacy. When any cause was offered to him, his first care was, by scrupulously inquiring into its circumstances, to ascertain whether justice was on the side on which he was to be retained ; if he found it otherwise, he rejected the cause, whatever emolument might be held out to him, and whatever opportunity it might afford for the display of his talents ; assuring the client, that he would not undertake " what he knew to be wrong, for all the wealth in the world."

Professional
conduct.

He frequently endeavoured to bring parties to an accommodation ; and if in this friendly office he failed, he still pointed out the method by which the

* It may seem strange that either argument or example should be requisite to prove, that success in a profession where so much depends on general knowledge, on an intimate acquaintance with the general affairs of society, with the human heart, and the means of persuasion, should actually be promoted by great proficiency in these accomplishments. But unless we had the authority of Blackstone, joined to the examples of More, Bacon, Clarendon, Wilmot, Mansfield, Hailes, Kaimes, &c. &c. with some living examples, which it might appear flattery to name, we might be afraid, in opposition to prejudices still almost as rooted as at the commencement of the sixteenth century, to assert, that great eminence and success in the law are compatible with wit, imagination, a cultivated taste, and an attachment to refined literature.

suit might be carried on with least expence. While he undertook and prosecuted the cause of the poor with peculiar alacrity and zeal, he refused the price which they were so ill able to pay for justice ; and from the widow and the orphan he would accept no recompence but what such actions unavoidably confer on a generous mind. *

Appointed
Judge of the
Sheriff's
Court.

1514.

His talents and integrity having now raised him to high reputation, he was appointed, by the city of London, Judge of the Sheriff's Court, an office then accounted very honourable. In this station his conduct soon made it be generally remarked, that no one had decided so many causes in so short a space, or given such universal satisfaction by his decisions. At that period it was customary for the contending parties, previous to trial, to pay into court an established fee, which formed the perquisite of the judge ; but More, whenever the circumstances of the party seemed to require it, remitted this fee, being determined that no one should be aggrieved while seeking the redress of his wrongs. While this disinterestedness, a virtue in public men which of all others most excites the popular admiration, added greatly to his fame, the returns of his profession fortunately kept pace with the liberality of his disposition. From

* Roper, p. 5.

his practice and office he derived an income of four hundred pounds a-year, a sum to which, allowing for the depreciation of money, six times the amount would, in the present day, be scarcely more than equivalent. *

Yet, amidst the continual hurry of business in which he was involved, his active and indefatigable mind still found opportunity to devote some portion of his time to literary pursuits. In his earlier years, he had attached himself to compositions in verse; and, at a more mature period, he had laboured with much assiduity to acquire an elegant style in prose. In declamations, or speeches on various subjects, which, in that age, were a favourite species of composition, he often exercised his talents; and both wrote and delivered them with great applause. † His more laboured pieces were all composed in Latin; and, if they are somewhat deficient in grace and ease, we must make great allowances for him and the other writers of his time, who, from the rudeness of the languages in which they thought and usually spoke, were obliged to compose in a tongue acquired only from books.

It was during this period that he commenced a history of the two very short reigns which passed

* Roper, p. 5.

† Erasm. Tom. I. c. 266. edit. 1703.

during his own infancy, those of Edward V. and Richard III. On a work which suddenly breaks off in the middle of the narrative, and which can, therefore, be considered only as a fragment, it would be unfair to make particular comments, since the style must be accounted as unfinished as the argument. Its accuracy, however, seems amply to compensate for the want of elegance, since it has been copied by all succeeding historians, as the most authentic document of the period to which it relates.* It is much to be regretted that a historian, on whose veracity and judgment the most implicit dependence could be placed, did not continue his narrative through those events which fell immediately under his own observation. But More seems to have found greater delight in forming a kingdom of his own, for it was during this active period of his life that he wrote his most laboured and elegant work, the *Utopia*.

The *Utopia*. The *Utopia* is a philosophical romance, in which More, after the manner of Plato, erects an imaginary republic, arranges a society in a form entirely new, and endows it with institutions more

* Such is the observation of Mr Hume, in his *History of England*, note (K.) Vol. III. 8vo edit. In note (M) he opposes to all other contradictory accounts "the narrative of Sir Thomas More, whose singular magnanimity, probity, and judgment, make him an evidence beyond all exception. No historian, either of ancient or modern times, can possibly have more weight."

likely to secure its happiness than any which mankind have hitherto experienced. But, with an improvement on the model of Plato, the republic of the Utopians assumes an actual existence : it is discovered by an adventurous navigator in a distant part of the new hemisphere, where it had for many ages continued to flourish ; and More only communicates to the world what he learned from the narrative of this intelligent eye-witness. The work is divided into two books, of which the first is occupied by a dialogue, containing a number of strictures on the most prominent defects in the political institutions of the old world. The pleasing manner in which this part of the work is written, the felicity of the style, the elegance of the satire, the acuteness of the remarks on men and manners, the freedom and manliness of the opinions, would have raised it to distinction in any age ; but, in the rude and ignorant period when it appeared, they entitle it to high admiration. Similar praise is due to various passages in the second part, where the country, the manners, and the political institutions of the Utopians are described. Yet while we allow much to the ingenuity, much to the judgment of the author, it must be acknowledged, that many of the laws and practices of this new republic are by no means improvements ; that the author has been more successful in exposing defects than in providing remedies ; and that his regulations

are often fitted rather for the beings of his own fancy, than for those with whom the Creator has peopled this world. *

The reputation which More derived from the *Utopia* was proportioned to its merit. A philosophical romance, written in the language and with the spirit of an ancient Roman, was received with wonder and enthusiasm by the eager cultivators of ancient learning. He was greeted with poetical encomiums, and loaded with panegyrical epistles of immeasurable length.† With so much skill and apparent simplicity are the dialogue and the narrative conducted, that many persons considered them as real. Some envious critics even went so far as to affirm, that Hythlodæus (the traveller who relates these wonders) had not only furnished the materials, but had dictated the whole from beginning to end ; while More, who now carried off all the reputation, had acted as a mere amanuensis. It is even said that some zealous Catholics, moved

* As this performance drew, in a particular manner, on More the attention of his contemporaries, and contributed, in no small degree, to extend his fame ; as it affords a curious display of his views respecting many moral and political topics ; and as, in our times, while the *Utopia* is familiarly spoken of by every man, little is generally known of it beyond the name ; the reader will probably be desirous of some further account of the work. I have, therefore, subjoined a short sketch of it in Appendix I., where also will be found some particulars of More's other writings.

† See Stapleton, *Vita Thomæ Mori*, p. 184.

by the virtues of the Utopians, had serious thoughts of embarking in an attempt to achieve the good work of their conversion.

While the reception of his Utopia extended the literary reputation of More, both at home and abroad, he began to be regarded, not only as a zealous cultivator, but as a liberal patron, of literature. Patronizes literature. Scholars did not then, as now, derive the pecuniary rewards of their labours from the sale of their works : the number of readers was too small, and the expence, both of publishing and circulating books, in the infancy of printing and commerce, too great, to afford, in this way, almost any returns to an author. Every one, therefore, who, without patrimony, or some lucrative profession, devoted himself to literature, was obliged to have recourse, even for the means of subsistence, to the bounty of the wealthy. Reduced to the necessity of perpetually stimulating their languid generosity by assiduous court, by fulsome dedications, and long flattering epistles, even the most dexterous and importunate frequently failed in obtaining their precarious reward ; and celebrated scholars had often scarcely bread to eat. * In such times, even the

* It is with sentiments of deep regret that we must peruse the account of the difficulties under which these early cultivators of learning, to whom the world owes so much, continually laboured. The distresses of Erasmus, the finest genius of his age, who contributed so much to free the human mind from darkness and bondage, are pe-

comparatively limited fortune of More, by occasionally relieving the necessities of men of genius, was capable of affording essential service to literature; while his liberality, overstepping the limits of prudence, often ministered to the wants of destitute scholars, without regarding the pressure of his own difficulties. *

His literary
friendships.

Nor was he prevented by his professional pursuits from cultivating an acquaintance with almost all the more eminent literary characters of his age. Of those within his reach he enjoyed occasionally the conversation; with others at a distance he maintained a regular correspondence. In that age, various circumstances contributed to render epistolary intercourse a favourite practice with scholars. Destitute of those helps which a ready ac-

cularly affecting. We are shocked to find him receiving, with joy, from a casual contributor, a few pieces of money. We are still more shocked to observe the effect of his difficulties in blunting his finer feelings. He seems at length to have considered mankind at large as a sordid race, on whom, callous as they were to the claims of merit, he was entitled to levy contributions by any means in his power, short of dishonesty. Hence we find him perpetually assailing the purses of his more wealthy friends with the most urgent solicitations, demanding sometimes a sum of money, sometimes a horse, which he made no scruple to sell as soon as he had received it. Though occasionally repulsed with very little ceremony, yet he often found this importunity successful, and was enabled to keep his horses, and drink his old wine, comforts necessary for his weak constitution. But for these what a price did he pay! See Jortin's Life of Erasmus.

* *Erasm. Epist.* 605.

cess to books now affords, they were doubly anxious to observe the progress of each other, and to profit by the attainments of the most successful. Yet the expence, the difficulty, and even the insecurity of passing from one country to another, rendered their personal interviews very unfrequent, and letters were almost their only means of communication. But, from the want of regular posts, even this mode of communication was rendered very uncertain; and if they missed the opportunity of occasional couriers, they could transmit their letters only by the expensive conveyance of special messengers.* This made their epistles extend to a length of which, in the present age, we can have no idea: the writers were anxious to crowd into a single letter a multiplicity of observations, and to draw forth, by their questions, a variety of information. A letter sometimes included the discussion of a whole controversy, the defence of particular opinions, and the refutation of adversaries. The number of such Latin epistles, or rather dissertations, which a literary man would write in the course of his life, is astonishing. Those of Erasmus, if we may judge from the many hundreds which are still preserved, must have amounted to

* Erasmus found himself under the necessity of retaining a number of young men to carry to different parts his numerous letters, and receive the gratuities of his friends. Jortin, Vol. I. p. 18.

several thousands ; and if the remaining letters of More are less numerous, some of them, by their prodigious length, prove that he yielded to few in epistolary exertion.

More's chief literary correspondent, and most valued friend, was the celebrated Erasmus. These two were reputed the most elegant scholars, as well as the greatest wits, of their time. Frank, open, and animated, fond of indulging themselves in the most unrestrained freedom of conversation, and ready to extract amusement from almost every occurrence of life, their dispositions were remarkably congenial.* Before an opportunity occurred of

* If we may judge from the pictures of Holbein, they also bore, both in the form and expression of their countenances, a striking resemblance to each other. Their similarity in other respects was noticed by their contemporaries, as Erasmus informs us in the following passage, so elegant and so complimentary to More. It occurs in a letter to his correspondent, Richard Whitford. "*Latine declamare coepi, idque impulsore Thoma Moro, cujus, uti scis, tanta est facundia, ut nihil non possit persuadere vel hosti: tanta autem hominem caritate complector, ut etiam si saltare me, restim-que ductare jubeat, sim non gravatim obtemperaturus. Neque enim arbitror, nisi me vehemens in illum fallit amor, unquam naturam finxisse ingenium hoc uno præsentius, promptius, occulatus, argutius, breviterque dotibus omnigenis absolutius. Accedit lingua ingenio par, tum morum mira festivitas, salis plurimum, sed candidi duntaxat; ut nihil in eo desideres quod ad absolutum pertineat patronum. Hortor autem ut et Moricam conferas, itaque judices, num quid in stylo sit discriminis inter nos, quos tu ingenio, moribus, affectibus, studiis, usque adco similes esse dicere solebas, ut negares ullos gemellos magis inter se similes reperiri posse.*" *Erasmii Opera*, Tom. I. c. 266.

meeting, they had long, by report and correspondence, known and admired each other ; and as their genius, their manners, their studies were alike, their first personal intercourse produced a friendship both warm and permanent. * Untinctured by the jealousy so often excited by similarity of pursuits, they admired and extolled each other, and, in spite of the arts of ill-designing persons, who envied their acquirements and fame, their attachment continued unabated to the end of their lives. Erasmus, whenever an opportunity occurs, seems to dwell with particular delight on every thing relating to More ; his appearance, his manners, his habits, his accomplishments. †

* A story is related of More's first interview with Erasmus, which, although doubted by Jortin, ought perhaps to be mentioned, as it is repeated by nearly all the writers of More's life. When Erasmus came to England for the first time, it is said to have been contrived by the person who conducted him over, that he and More should meet, without either of them knowing of it, at the Lord Mayor's table, which was then open to literary men of every nation. A controversy happening to arise at dinner, Erasmus, according to a practice in those days, began to display his powers by defending the wrong side of the question. He was immediately opposed by More, and a brilliant display of wit and argument ensued between these antagonists. Erasmus, surprised to find himself so equally matched, a circumstance which perhaps had never occurred to him before, at length exclaimed with vehemence, "*Aut tu Morus es, aut nullus :*" to which More, equally surprised, replied, "*Aut tu es Erasmus, aut Diabolus.*" Stapleton, *Vita Thomæ Mori. More's Life*, by his great-grandson, Thomas More, p. 82, edit. 1627. Hoddesdon, p. 28, edit. 1662.

† In the following letter, where Erasmus describes his admired

Attracts the
notice of
Henry.

The reputation of More for integrity, ability, and learning, had, by this time, attracted the at-

friend, in a letter to Hutten, if some of the particulars are so minute as to excite a smile, they fully show the high value which the writer entertained for More, and the interest with which he observed the most trifling circumstances connected with him.—“ To begin with what is least known to you of More, his person is rather below than above the middle size, yet not so much as to be at all remarked ; while, so perfect is the symmetry of his limbs, that no part seems capable of improvement. His skin is fair ; his complexion pale, yet in no respect sickly, but slightly tinged throughout with a delicate transparent red ; his hair chestnut, his beard thin, his eyes light grey, interspersed with some specks, a colour which usually denotes a most happy disposition, and is even accounted handsome among the British, while among our people (the Germans) black eyes are held in more esteem. The former imagine such eyes to indicate a character particularly free from all manner of vice. His countenance, completely corresponding with his disposition, is expressive of an agreeable and friendly cheerfulness, with somewhat of a habitual inclination to smile ; and, to own the truth, appears more adapted to pleasantry than to gravity or dignity, although perfectly remote from vulgarity or silliness. From a boy, he was always most negligent of his outward appearance, and paid scarcely any attention to those things which the courtly Ovid seems to reckon the only cares worthy of men. From his present appearance at forty, I might conjecture that in his youth his person must have been graceful, had I not myself known him at the age of three-and-twenty. His constitution is rather good than robust ; and while it is capable of sustaining the fatigues of any liberal employment, it is liable to few or no diseases. He has every prospect of being long-lived, since his father has attained a very advanced age, yet still remains fresh and vigorous. I never saw any one less nice in his choice of food. By a predilection derived from his father, water was, in his early years, his favourite drink ; but that he might not appear singular or affected, he used to escape the notice of those who sat at table with him, by drinking water,

tention of Henry VIII. That prince, himself no mean scholar, according to the common rate of acquirements in that age, was passionately desirous to obtain distinction by his learning, and eager to enjoy both the conversation and applause of the learned. But More, besides being so distinguished a scholar, had also proved his capacity for public business, both in adjusting some very intricate and important disputes between the English merchants and the foreign company of the Steel-yard,* and in the assistance which he afforded to Tonsal, ^{1516.} Bishop of Durham, during a mission to Flanders.† Henry having, on all these accounts, become eager to engage him in his service, commanded Wolsey

or very small beer, out of a goblet. For the same reason, and that he might learn the general habits of society, he at times conformed to the custom of his countrymen, who drink by turns from the same vessel; and on these occasions he prevailed on himself to touch the wine with his lips. He is much fonder of those kinds of fare which are accounted coarse and common, than of the delicacies employed by the luxurious to stimulate the appetite. The most simple diet, milk and fruit, he prefers to the highest flavoured dishes on his table; so that his taste in food, like his other desires, seems to be formed by nature for simplicity and moderation. His voice is neither remarkably powerful nor weak, but readily heard; and is extremely distinct, yet by no means soft or melodious; for although he is remarkably fond of music, nature seems to have given him no powers for singing. His pronunciation is uncommonly plain and articulate, without either hurry or hesitation." *Erasm. Epist.* 447.

* Roper, p. 5.

† Roper, p. 13. More, p. 39.

to make this wish known, and offer him a pension, as an earnest of future favours. * But this proposal, which most other men would have fondly embraced as a fair opening to wealth and honours, was viewed with very different eyes by More.

Aversion to a court, from love of ease and independence.

To the life of a courtier he had many causes of insurmountable dislike. Passionately fond of independence, he was most unwilling to look up to the precarious bounty of an arbitrary prince, for what he could better procure by the exercise of an honourable profession. As the ease, familiarity, and freedom which a man enjoys among his equals afforded him peculiar gratification, that constraint, formality, and constant attention to external show, which then, still more than now, infested courts, were no less his aversion. In his dress, which was simple, and even negligent to an unusual degree, † he used neither the silks, the scarlet, nor the ornaments of gold then in fashion among persons of his rank, unless when their omission might have been construed into disrespect. ‡ Still more indifferent to formalities of all sorts, and accounting a minute and constant attention to such trifles unworthy of a man, he was not solicitous to address others, and still less anxious to be addressed, with the studied terms and gestures which custom had

* Roper, p. 5. More, p. 38.

† More, p. 27.

‡ Erasim. Epist. 147.

prescribed.* So far only did he conform to fashionable usage, as to avoid the imputation of singularity, a trespass which, in his opinion, indicated no less vanity and weakness than a frivolous precision in imitating the prevailing modes.† To a person of such habits and such opinions, what could be more irksome than the ceremony of a court just escaped from barbarism, and still labouring under the cumbrous appendages of feudal pageantry?

Nor was he less deterred from entering the king's service by that constant attendance which the monarchs of that age required from their ministers and courtiers. Though much occupied by the business of his profession, he still found means to spend some portion of almost every day in the bosom of his family, the scene of his most valued enjoyments. Having, soon after his appearance at the bar, married a lady of a good family, but very young, and entirely unacquainted with the world, he had studiously formed the manners and ideas of his companion for life to a correspondence with his own. Carefully instructed by her zealous tutor in polite literature, in music, in whatever seemed necessary to improve or adorn her mind, she became a woman in whose society he might have spent the remainder of his days with delight. But Provi-

Domestic
avocations.

* Erasm. Epist. 447.

† More, p. 28.

dence had determined otherwise : she died at an early age, after having brought him several children, of whom a son and three daughters survived her. *

The care of his family, to which it was impossible he could attend, amidst the perpetual distractions of business, did not permit him to remain long a widower. His second wife was a widow, already well advanced in years, and retaining no very striking indications of early beauty, but remarkable for her dexterity in the management of family affairs. Although she was little endowed with any quality which could excite attachment, he behaved to her with the same complacency as if she had been both amiable and young ; and by his kind and playful manner, procured from her a more ready and complete obedience, than was ever obtained by the rude and repulsive tone of command. Though Mrs More was now beyond the prime of life, of a temper by no means tractable, and remarkably solicitous about her domestic affairs, he prevailed on her to take lessons on several of his favourite musical instruments, and regularly devote a portion of every day to these accomplishments. †

Education
of his chil-
dren.

In the intervals of business, the education of his children formed his principal avocation, as well as his greatest pleasure. His son, whose faculties

* *Erasm. Epist.* 447.

† *Ibid.*

seemed, by nature, little capable of cultivation, proved a remarkable instance of what may be effected by careful instruction. By methods adapted to his capacity, he acquired a competent knowledge both of literature and business ; and became respectable, not only as a man of worth, but as a member of the community, and the head of a family. But it was in the accomplishments of his daughters that More found the most gratifying reward of his cares. His opinions respecting female education are distinctly related by Erasmus, and differed very widely from what the comparative rudeness of that age might have led us to expect. By nothing, he justly thought, is female virtue so much endangered as by idleness, and the necessity of amusement ; nor against these is there any safeguard so effectual as an attachment to literature. Some security is indeed afforded by a diligent application to various sorts of female employments ; yet these, while they employ the hands, give but partial occupation to the mind. But well-chosen books at once engage the thoughts, refine the taste, strengthen the understanding, and confirm the morals. Female virtue, informed by the knowledge which they impart, is placed on the most secure foundations, while all the milder affections of the heart, partaking in the improvement of the taste and fancy, are refined and matured. More was no convert to the notion, that the possession of

knowledge has the effect of rendering women less pliant ; nothing, in his opinion, was so untractable as ignorance. Although to manage with skill the ordinary detail of feeding and clothing a family, be an essential portion in the duties of a wife and a mother ; yet, to secure the affections of a husband, during the continued and permanent intercourse of the married state, he judged it no less indispensable to possess the qualities of an intelligent and agreeable companion. Nor ought a husband, if he regards his own happiness, to turn aside with fastidious negligence, from the task of repairing the usual defects of female education. Never can he hope to be so truly beloved, esteemed, and respected, as when his wife confides in him as her friend, and looks up to him as her instructor. *

Such were the opinions, with regard to female education, which More maintained in discourse, and supported by his practice. His daughters, rendered proficient in music, and other elegant accomplishments proper for their sex, were also instructed in Latin, the only language in which, at that period, a more refined literature was to be found. Their progress corresponded with the zeal of their father, since they read, wrote, and conversed in the language of Rome with equal facility and correctness. When compelled by busi-

* *Erasm. Epist.* 605.

ness to be absent from home, he maintained a frequent intercourse by letter with his children, receiving from them an account of every step in their progress, and giving them, in return, such instructions as seemed most requisite to their improvement.* With their tutors, also, he maintained a correspondence equally regular; and while he expressed his obligations to them for cultivating the abilities of his children, he besought them always to recollect, that learning was valuable only as subservient to the conduct of life, and the improvement of the heart.† He entreated that any appearance of ostentation and vanity in his daughters might be checked; and that their superior knowledge might not be allowed to destroy that unassuming manner, which is among the first of female virtues, or to produce a pedantry which is no less intolerable than ignorance. Their knowledge, he felt assured, would, as it extended, teach them rather to be humble than proud, since it would show them how little they knew, how much they had to learn; while the refinement of their taste would contribute to harmonize their affections, and shed a more exquisite gentleness over their manners.‡

* Stapleton, p. 257. More, p. 131.

† Letter to Gurnal, in Stapleton, p. 253.

‡ Some of the letters of More, which throw great light on his sentiments concerning education, are inserted in Appendix II.

The effects resulting from this assiduous attention soon became conspicuous ; and the School of More, as it was termed, attracted general admiration.

In the mean time, Mrs More, their stepmother, a notable economist, by distributing tasks of which she required a punctual performance, took effectual precautions that they should not remain unacquainted with female works, and with the internal management of a family. For all these purposes, which together appear so far beyond the ordinary industry of women, their time was found amply sufficient, because no part of it was wasted in idleness or trifling amusements. Erasmus, from whom we derive these particulars, and who was often an inmate of this family, captivated with the easy manners, the animated conversation, the extraordinary accomplishments of these young ladies, could not help owning himself a complete convert to More's sentiments of female education. Yet while he admired their improvement, and shared in the pleasures it diffused, he could not help remarking one day to his friend, how severe a calamity it would be if such accomplished beings, whom he had so painfully and successfully laboured to improve, should happen to be snatched away ! " If they are to die," replied More, without hesitation, " I would rather have them die well-informed than ignorant." " This reply," continues Erasmus, " reminded me of a saying of Phocion,

whose wife, as he was about to drink the poison, according to his sentence, exclaimed, "Ah! my husband, you die innocent!" "And would you, my wife," he rejoined, "rather have me die guilty?"*

More's family lived in a house which he had built at Chelsea, on a large scale, but with more ^{His domestic happiness.} attention to comfort than splendour. It was surrounded with gardens extending to the Thames,† and in adorning and beautifying these, a work which he himself superintended, he found incessant employment for that train of servants, whom the custom of the age obliged persons of his rank to maintain, and who, by their idle habits, usually contributed to diffuse corruption.‡ His taste for natural history, and for observing the instincts of various animals, afforded them another source of constant occupation. His collection, which he had procured with much labour and expence, was disposed in such a manner, that the eye of the guest, on entering the approach to his house, was every where amused with rare birds, quadrupeds, and other natural curiosities.§ If any of his servants discovered a taste for reading, or an ear for music,

* Erasm. Epist. 605.

† This house was situated at the north end of Beaufort Row, extending westward, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the Thames. Lysons's *Environs of London*, Vol. II. p. 80.

‡ Hoddesdon, p. 30.

§ Erasm. Epist. 447.

he allowed them to cultivate their favourite pursuit. To preclude all improper conversation before children and servants at table, a domestic was accustomed to read aloud certain passages, so selected as to amuse at the time, and to afford matter for much entertaining conversation. * “ I would call this house,” says Erasmus, “ the academy of Plato, were it not injustice to compare it to a place where the usual disputations concerning figures and numbers were only occasionally interspersed with disquisitions about the moral virtues. A house, in which every one studies the liberal sciences, where the principal care is virtue and piety, where idleness never appears, where intemperate language is never heard, where regularity and order are preserved by mere dint of kindness and courtesy, where every one performs his duty, and yet all are so cheerful, as if mirth were their only employment—such a house ought rather to be termed a practical school of the Christian religion.” †

Much of the happiness of More’s family, of its perpetual good humour, and unbroken harmony, is to be attributed to his own peculiar felicity of temper. His son-in-law, Mr Roper, who lived in his house for sixteen years, assures us, that, during all that period, his countenance was never seen cloud-

* Stapleton, p. 250. Hoddewdon, p. 30.

† Farrago Epist. lib. 27, cited in Stapleton, p. 247.

ed, nor his voice altered with anger. * Disappointments, even when serious, he received with unruffled composure, and his reproofs of negligence or misconduct were either very innocent railery, or mild, though serious, admonition. This tranquillity and kindness, diffusing themselves over his family, every thing was there conducted with gentleness, and the loud language of anger and reproach altogether banished. As any trifling quarrel, which happened accidentally to arise, was, by a general interference, immediately adjusted, none of those little sources of ill-humour, which often destroy the peace of families more than circumstances of a more serious nature, were suffered to rankle and breed new dissensions. Mrs More, acquiring, from the influence of such humanizing habits, a benevolence little to be expected from the natural asperity of her temper, behaved to her step-daughters with the same kindness, and was in return beloved by them with the same sincerity, as if she had been their mother. When the son and daughters were at length married, as the family could not endure the idea of separation, More contrived to accommodate the whole in his own house, as well as eleven grandchildren, who were, in time, the fruit of their marriages. It contained, besides, a step-daughter by his second wife, and an orphan

* Roper, p. 13.

girl, whom he had generously educated along with his daughters, and who well deserved the bounty she received. The unsullied reputation and prosperity of the family were no less conspicuous than its harmony. "The happiness of that house," says Erasmus, "seems secured by a law of fate; no one has lived in it without having his condition improved; no one has had a stain thrown on his reputation." *

His social
intercourse.

The pleasures of this domestic circle were enlivened by a continual succession of learned and ingenious visitors, whom the reputation, the wit, the hospitality of More, drew around him. "By no one," says Erasmus, "are friendships more readily formed, more diligently cultivated, more stedfastly retained. If he discovers any one, with whom he has formed an intimacy, to be irreclaimably vicious, he gradually discontinues the intimacy, but never breaks it off in an abrupt or mortifying manner. On the other hand, it is in the intercourse of those friends, whose dispositions prove congenial to his own, that the chief delight of his life seems to be placed. An utter enemy to gaming, and all those unmeaning amusements, by which the idle part of society endeavour to escape from the insupportable languor of existence, his leisure hours are spent in the conversation of a society

* Erasmi. Epist. 147.

where his own politeness, ease, and vivacity, diffuse universal good humour and gaiety. Careless of his own affairs, he is ever most assiduous in the service of his friends; and, to sum up his character in a few words, if the pattern of a perfect friend be required, let it be sought for in More." * From the society which he thus collected around him, he was careful to banish whatever might encroach upon its freedom or cheerfulness. Regardless of that estimation which men of his rank and station so eagerly sought from giving sumptuous and ceremonious entertainments to the great nobles; he enjoyed in the society of his friends and neighbours an intercourse the more agreeable, as it was wholly unembarrassed by restraint. † As he possessed, in an eminent degree, the faculty of conducting an argument with spirit, yet with mildness, and of appeasing the angry feelings of others, by some happy stroke of humour, the conversation at his table was always interesting, and often brilliant. ‡

That More should have been unwilling to abandon, for the joyless ceremonies of a court, a society so captivating, and which owed to himself the whole structure of its happiness, cannot excite our surprise. The care with which he watched over its enjoyments, is expressed with much feeling in an epistle, where he excuses himself to a friend for

* Erasm. Epist. 447. † More, 149. ‡ Roper, p. 13.

some delay in the completion of his Utopia. "While I am continually engaged in the business of my profession, in pleading some causes, in hearing others, in settling some as arbitrator, and in deciding others as judge; while I am under the necessity of paying a visit of business to one, and a visit of courtesy to another; while I thus devote nearly the whole of the day abroad to others, and the remainder to my family at home, I leave for myself, that is, for literature, no time at all. For when I return home, I must needs converse with my wife, trifle with my children, talk with my servants. All these I account matters of business, since they cannot be avoided, unless a man should choose to be a stranger in his own family. It is, besides, as indispensable to our happiness as to our duty, to render ourselves, by every means in our power, agreeable to those whom either nature, or chance, or our own choice, has rendered the companions of our lives. Let us be cautious only not to spoil them by too much compliance, or, by over-indulgence, to convert those who should obey us into our masters." *

Dangers of
a courtier's
situation.

But, besides the loss of domestic enjoyments, the penetration of More discovered other forcible reasons for declining the proffered favours of his sovereign. He knew how vain it was to oppose

* Morus ad Ægidium.

reason to the passions of an arbitrary prince, and he felt his integrity too stubborn and unaccommodating to utter what would please, in opposition to his conviction. In the present improved state of our political constitution, the monarch often finds it necessary, from the influence of public opinion, to appoint and retain in office persons who would otherwise by no means be his choice. If resolved to give way to his dislike or resentment, he can merely deprive the minister of his rank and emoluments ; while the statesman out of place always finds a considerable and active Opposition ready to receive him. By a well-directed exertion of his talents he may still hope to render himself formidable to the court, and even to regain the situation of which he has been deprived. But, in the age of More, the statesman, as he owed his elevation solely to the personal favour of the monarch, sunk, as soon as it was withdrawn, into obscurity and neglect, unless unhappily destined to a severer fate. If conspicuous either for his talents, or the influence which he had enjoyed, his successors, fearful lest he might, to their ruin, regain the favour he had lost, too often employed every art to inflame the resentment of his sovereign, and accomplish his final destruction. And if the king could be brought to consent to the death of a degraded minister, it was only necessary to bring an accusation, founded on some act which

he had sanctioned in compliance with the express commands of his monarch, or perhaps on allegations altogether false. Debarred, by the barbarous customs of that age, from pleading in his own defence, from producing the witnesses of his innocence, or confronting his accusers, he could only look forward to certain condemnation ; while an obsequious parliament, or trembling jury, however convinced of his innocence, would not venture to thwart the will of the sovereign.

Character of
Henry VIII.

These unfortunate circumstances, calculated to render the authority and life of an upright statesman so precarious under any monarch, were greatly aggravated by the capricious and ungovernable disposition of Henry VIII. Susceptible of violent passions, from the natural warmth of his temper, he had become habituated, by the arbitrary power placed early in his hands, to give way, without control, to their successive impulses. The passion of the moment seemed wholly to engross his faculties, and no consideration of morality or prudence could restrain him from pursuing its gratification. His attachments and friendships were uncommonly ardent while they lasted, but his desires were no sooner attracted by some new objects, than all remembrance of his former inclinations seemed to be obliterated. The most beloved wife, and the most favourite minister, if they stood in the way of

his new propensity, were, with callous indifference, hurried to the scaffold.

To More, who had imbibed, from the authors of Greece and Rome, sentiments of manly freedom, the degradation, no less than the danger, of such a precarious dependence on the will of an arbitrary monarch, was deeply repugnant. After many earnest entreaties, therefore, to be excused from accepting the favours intended him, (for it was dangerous to refuse even the invitations of Henry, unless in the humble form of a request,) the king was graciously pleased to dispense, for the present, with his attendance.

But the ability displayed in the management of a cause, which attracted much public notice, soon afterwards gave an additional lustre to More's reputation. A large ship of the Pope's having been seized in the port of Southampton by the king's officers, was reclaimed on the part of his Holiness: and More, on account both of his professional celebrity, and his thorough acquaintance with Latin, which enabled him readily to explain the arguments on both sides to the Roman legate, was selected to plead in favour of its restoration. The claim was argued before the Lord Chancellor, and all the judges in the Star Chamber; the exertions of More were crowned with success; and Henry, still more strongly incited by this new display of talents, to engage him in his service, would no

More appointed
Treasurer
of the Ex-
chequer.

longer admit of an excuse. * More, however reluctant, being compelled to submit, was appointed master of the requests, the best place which, at the moment, happened to be vacant. He was soon afterwards created a knight and a privy-counsellor, and, in the following year, raised to the office of treasurer of the exchequer. †

In great favour,

from his learning,

Henry was greatly delighted with More. He found him not only a ready and penetrating counsellor in affairs of state, but thoroughly acquainted with literature and the sciences of the times. Astronomy, in that age a rude science, and still connected with the mysteries of astrology, had occasionally occupied the attention of More, and was held in peculiar esteem by Henry. It was, therefore, not unusual to observe the king and his minister stationed in the night on the roof of the palace, counting the stars, and tracing the forms of the constellations. ‡ But the subject most grateful to both, and which most frequently engaged their conversation, was theology. Henry, who greatly valued himself on his skill in polemical divinity, and who was at this time a most orthodox Romanist, had determined to exert his pen in defence of the papal throne, against Luther, the arch heretic, by whom it was now assailed. The trea-

* Roper, p. 6. More, p. 43.

† More, 47.

‡ Roper, p. 6. Stapleton, p. 171. More, p. 48.

time which he wrote on this occasion was arranged and corrected by More ; * and whatever might be the respective shares of the king and the minister in the performance, to the former it procured, from the pope, the much valued title of Defender of the Faith ; while, to the latter, it brought, for the present, an increase of royal favour.

More, however, possessed talents of a very different description, which rendered him a favourite companion in the gayer moments of the king. We have seen that, even when a boy in the family of Cardinal Morton, he had distinguished himself by an uncommon flow of vivacity and humour ; and, as he advanced in years, these agreeable qualities seemed to increase. In his youth, he wrote comedies, and, according to the custom of the times, bore a part in their private representation. Of his epigrams, for which he had a particular talent, some are still preserved. Lucian was his favourite author ; he translated several of his dialogues ; and a letter sent to a friend, with a copy of the translation, shows his ardent admiration of that ingenious satyrist. † The mind of Erasmus was cast nearly in the same mould ; and his ludicrous *Encomium More* was, as that author himself informs us, written at the suggestion of More, and dedi-

wit, and humour.

* See a letter from More to Secretary Cromwell.

† *Morus ad Ruthelum.*

cated to him, as the proper patron of every thing humorous. Delighted with every stroke of wit, More was even satisfied to be himself its object, and did not refuse to join in a laugh raised at his own expence. Unless when some particular occasion required a more serious turn, his conversation with women was sportive and rallying. The severe study of the law, an incessant round of business, a strong tincture of devotion, and the austere penances in which he often exercised himself, diminished nothing of his natural vivacity and proneness to humour. Carelessness of wealth and honours, conscious integrity, contempt of death, and full reliance on the promises of religion, joined to perfect freedom from those malevolent and sinister purposes which cloud the countenances of men, left his mind at ease, and gave his temper a serenity and buoyancy which resisted every accident of fortune. Alive to all the beauties of nature or art, and equally sensible of their defects, his humour was keen, yet chastened by an unwillingness to offend; while his vivacity, arising from a warm sensibility, mingled with benevolence, was brilliant and inexhaustible.

These qualities soon rendered the king's demands on his attendance incessant. If Henry was inclined to throw all care aside, and abandon himself to mirth in the company of the queen, as was often his practice, More never failed to be invited

to the party. To a man of ambition and intrigue, nothing could have been more desirable than this constant and familiar access to the sovereign, at those moments when restraint was banished, and his mind rendered pliant by hilarity. But as More had no private purposes to serve, these honours were, in his eyes, a very unequal compensation for the loss of ease and liberty. Unable to reconcile his disposition or his habits to the perpetual ceremonies and tasteless pageantry of a court, he compares himself to a man who, unaccustomed to ride, sits very awkwardly in his saddle.* Henry, aware of his witty favourite's attachment to freedom, used frequently, in his merry moods, to condole with him on the misery (whimsical enough, as he no doubt imagined) of being dragged to court, and chained to the company of his prince. More, finding, at length, that he could scarcely steal one evening in a month, to enjoy himself at home with his family, in that intercourse which formed the great pleasure of his life, had recourse to an innocent stratagem. He abstained from any open expression of chagrin, but began gradually, and without exciting observation, to refrain from his usual facetiousness at the royal parties; and his company, being found less entertaining, was in time less required.†

* Stapleton, p. 229. More, p. 45. † Roper, p. 7. Stapleton, 171.

His public
conduct.

Of the share which More had in the public measures of that period, the information which has reached us is extremely imperfect. Plans of policy, in that age, were much less important and systematic than those to which we are now accustomed : they were hardly ever discussed before the legislature ; and the counsels given by each minister, being usually accounted among the mysteries of state, were seldom publicly known. The measures of each reign are, for the most part, indiscriminately attributed by historians to the monarch, and the minister is often defrauded of his due tribute of applause. The chief direction of affairs was at this time in the hands of Cardinal Wolsey ; a man who, to great talents and consummate address, joined a vanity which no applause could satiate, and an ambition which grasped beyond even his exorbitant power. Conscious of the tenure by which he held his authority, he readily stooped to any concession which could secure the favour of his prince ; but while desirous that Henry should consider himself the constant and only source of those measures, which flowed in fact from his uncontrolled minister, he was no less solicitous to impress on the world a very different opinion. In private he communicated his intentions to the monarch, in the most submissive and artful terms, seeming to follow where in fact he led ; but in the eyes of the public he gave his acts

every appearance of unrestrained and independent authority. Aware that the lofty pretensions of the son of an Ipswich butcher produced rather astonishment than respect among the people, he endeavoured to dazzle them by his splendour, and abash them by his arrogance.

With a man of this description More could have few opinions, and still fewer sentiments in common: but sensible that any decided opposition would have been fruitless, he confined himself almost exclusively to the duties of his office, which he discharged with unremitting zeal. But if he found it vain to resist many measures which he disapproved, we may conclude that he was guilty of no improper compliance, since, during his continuance in office, his reputation for integrity increased both with the prince and the people. When measures, which to him appeared exceptionable, were proposed, he made no scruple to express his opinion of them; a conduct far from agreeable to Wolsey, who was willing enough to make use of his abilities, but by no means satisfied to encounter his opposition. On one occasion, it is said, that the Cardinal, with much self-complacency, laid before him the draught of a measure which he was about to carry into execution, and requested his sentiments freely on every part of it. More, having attentively considered it, began, with his usual sincerity, to point out some things to be suppres-

sed, others to be amended, others to be added ; till at length, Wolsey, unable to suppress his mortification and wrath, asked him if he was not ashamed to prove himself a fool, by objecting to what all the other wise men of the council had approved ? “ Thanks be to God,” replied More gravely, “ that the king’s majesty hath but one fool in his right honourable council !” *

Influence on
national im-
provement.

But while he seems to have been little ambitious to interfere with affairs of state, his influence on national improvement was both conspicuous and important. Convinced that nothing could more essentially promote the extension of knowledge and refinement than the diffusion of those treasures which had been saved from the wreck of antiquity, he employed all the weight which he possessed, either from his own reputation or the favour of his prince, to excite a general enthusiasm for the cultivation of ancient learning. While professed scholars, disgusted with the smallness of their pecuniary rewards, too frequently contributed to bring literary pursuits into utter disregard, by representing them as not only unprofitable, but ruinous ; More took every opportunity to declare, that to literature he owed more confirmed health, a sounder mind, an ampler fortune ; that, while he had thus acquired the favour of his prince, and conciliated the love of

* More, p. 57.

his family and the esteem of strangers, he had become more agreeable to his friends, more useful to his country, more adapted to the duties of every station, and, finally, more acceptable in the sight of heaven. After the most difficult and important labours, he was found with the authors of Greece and Rome in his hands ; while, at the same time, it was observed, that no man was more easy of access at all hours, more ready to oblige, more cheerful in company, or more polished in his manners. *

These circumstances, when added to the example which More set in the education of his own family, were soon attended with the happiest consequences. That literature, which had hitherto, for the most part, been looked on as equally unfit for use or ornament, now became an object of more general attention, and a learned education began to be considered as a necessary appendage to rank. † The effects which his maxims and example produced on female education were peculiarly striking : the daughters of noble families began to vie with each other in literature, and those of More were only the first English ladies who could write and speak in the languages of Greece and Rome. The Princesses Mary and Elizabeth, as well as their relative the Lady Jane Grey, were educated

* *Erasm. Epist.* 605.

† *Ibid.*

along with their brother Edward ; and if Mary, from habits already too confirmed, profited little by this instruction, its effects in imparting strength and dignity to the female mind were proved by Elizabeth on a throne, and by Jane on a scaffold. The happy consequences of the general diffusion of useful knowledge among females of distinction were soon felt and acknowledged. As mothers, they communicated their attainments to their children ; as the leaders of fashion, they rendered them the desire even of the gay and vain ; and the succeeding reign of Elizabeth became already an Augustan age of English literature.

1523.

Speaker of
the House of
Commons.

After holding the treasurership of the exchequer three years, More was, by the king's direction, chosen speaker of the House of Commons.*

When that arbitrary monarch signified his pleasure on such occasions, neither the House durst refuse to appoint the person he nominated, nor the person nominated refuse the appointment. It was, however, with much reluctance that More undertook the office. The speaker of the House of Commons, in our times, holding a situation equally honourable and independent, since the court can neither control nor awe him, can act in security as a man of spirit and integrity. But under the reign of Henry VIII., the opposition between the de-

* Roper, p. 7.

mands of the court and the interests of his country, frequently placed him in the most disagreeable and dangerous situation. While, as a man of principle, it was often impossible to submit to the former; he was in danger, if he ventured to maintain the latter, of incurring his own ruin, without any benefit to his country.

These difficulties were experienced by More, almost immediately after his appointment. The king, reduced by his extravagance to great straits, having demanded a large supply, Wolsey, who knew that the Commons, though abundantly compliant in almost every other respect, were often very determined in their refusal of money, especially when they did not approve the manner of expending it, resolved, in hopes of overawing the members, to be present at the moving of the question. With this view, he repaired in state to the House; and having shown, in a solemn speech, the necessity of the supply, concluded with requiring an immediate answer to the king's demand. The House, however, irritated at this extraordinary stretch of power, and resolved not to be thus deprived of their right of deliberation, received his commands in profound silence; and though he successively addressed himself to each of the most considerable members, none of them could be induced to reply. Enraged at this treatment, which appeared to him contemptuous, he told them that the

obstinacy of their silence was astonishing, unless, perhaps, their custom was to reply only by their speaker; in which case he now made the same demand to him, which he had already made to the whole House. More, desirous rather to elude this ill-timed requisition, than to urge matters to an extremity, apologized, with great apparent reverence, for the conduct of the members, abashed, as they must be, by the presence of so noble and extraordinary a personage. He showed that to return an answer to his Majesty's message by any other persons, how great soever, than some of their own members, was contrary to the ancient privileges of the House; and he concluded by humbly declaring that, though all the members had entrusted him with their voices, yet, unless they could also put their several judgments into his head, he alone was not able, in so weighty a matter, to make a proper reply to his Grace. This evasive answer was far from satisfying the haughty Cardinal, who hastily rose up, and, in great wrath, quitted the House.*

More generally found his wit and thorough command of temper the most effectual defence against Wolsey, who was, to the last degree, impatient of contradiction. A few days after this transaction in the House of Commons, the Cardinal

* Roper, p. 10. Stapleton, p. 285.

happening to meet with him, complained loudly of his behaviour, and at length exclaimed, "Would to God you had been at Rome, Mr More, when I made you speaker." "Your Grace not offended," replied the other, "so would I too; for then I should have seen an ancient and famous city, which I have long desired to see." *

But though, by this sort of management, joined His disputes with Wolsey. to a behaviour perfectly inoffensive, he kept on apparently good terms with Wolsey; yet the vain and ambitious Cardinal could not behold his shining talents, his great popularity, and the warm friendship which the king often expressed for him, without feeling strong sentiments of jealousy and dislike. But as it was not possible to remove so great a favourite from court, unless under pretence of promoting his advancement; an embassy, which was about to be sent into Spain, seemed to afford a suitable occasion for executing this design. Wolsey, accordingly, expatiated to the king on the learning, wisdom, and tried dexterity of More; declaring, that there was no other person in the kingdom so fit to conduct the negotiation. Henry, readily assenting to these opinions, and glad to have found an opportunity of gratifying More, immediately acquainted him with his intended honours. But More, who felt a strong aversion to

* Roper, p. 10. Stapleton, p. 285.

the appointment, represented to his Majesty that the climate of Spain was peculiarly ill suited to his constitution, and would probably prove fatal ; yet that, notwithstanding, if it was his Majesty's pleasure, he would prepare for the journey. Henry, who had no suspicion of the Cardinal's stratagem, replied, that he intended him good, and not harm ; and since he declined the appointment, would think of some other person. *

Opinions in
political economy.

On some important questions of political economy, which have in later times been so strangely misunderstood, the ideas of More appear to have been enlightened and profound. A subsidy having, on one occasion, been demanded by the government for carrying on a war against the Emperor, the Commons could not deny that it was requisite for the exigencies of the state ; but they urged as an apology for refusing it, that, as it must be paid in money, and not in goods, all the coin in their hands would be drained away ; that the whole course of sales and purchases would thus be altered, and the most ruinous consequences ensue ; that the landlord, if he received only corn and cattle from his tenants, instead of money, could not dispose of these commodities for the various articles of which he stood in need ; that a stop would necessarily be put to all traffic and merchandise ; that,

* Roper, p. 12. More, p. 63.

consequently, the shipping of the kingdom would decay; and that, in fine, as our coin, being employed in the payment of our forces abroad, would be transferred to enrich our enemies, the whole nation would, from want of money, and the consequent destruction of its commerce, both internal and external, become obscure and barbarous. In answer to this reasoning, More ridiculed the absurd supposition, that a kingdom could be enriched by the money introduced into it by an invasion; and exposed the folly of imagining, that the wealth of a country could be more injured by transferring its money than any of its other commodities into the hands of its government, or even of foreign nations. He argued, "that the money ought not to be accounted as lost or taken away, but only transferred into other hands of their kindred or nation; that herein no more was done than what we ordinarily see in markets, where, though the money change masters, yet every one may be accommodated." "You have no reason," continued he, "to fear this penury or scarceness of money, the intercourse of things being so established throughout the whole world, that there is a perpetual derivation of all that can be necessary to mankind. Thus your commodities will ever find out money; while, not to go far, I shall produce your own merchants only, who, let me assure you, will be always as glad of your corn and cattle, as you can be of any thing they bring

you.”* Here we find the sagacity of More penetrating to those complicated truths with respect to the nature and use of money, the developement of which, nearly three centuries afterwards, raised Adam Smith to the highest station among political economists.

Employ-
ment in em-
bassies ;

For the conduct of affairs requiring peculiar sagacity, management, and command of temper, More was held in high estimation ; yet he seems to have anxiously declined diplomatic missions, both as they would have placed him too directly under the control of Wolsey, and have removed him to a distance from his family.† Occasionally, however, he was obliged to act as a negotiator ; and having attended Wolsey in his embassy to France in 1527, he acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of Henry, as to be rewarded, on his return, with the chancellorship of the duchy of Lancaster.‡ Two years afterwards, we find him employed, in conjunction with his much esteemed friend, Tonstal, Bishop of Durham, to assist at the famous negotiations at Cambray. The conditions

1529.

* The Life and Reign of Henry VIII., by Lord Herbert of Cheshire, edit. 1741, p. 112.

† “ I do not like my office of Ambassador,” says he merrily to Erasmus ; “ it doth not suit a married man thus to leave his family : it is much fitter for you ecclesiastics, *qui primum uxores ac liberos, aut domi non habetis, aut ubique reperitis.*” See Jortin, Vol. I. p. 89.

More, p. 54.

of the treaty of Madrid, which Charles V. had hastily compelled Francis I. to sign, while he held him in captivity, having been found too dishonourable and pernicious to be executed ; an attempt was made to prevent the renewal of hostilities between France and Spain. Accordingly, Louise, mother of the French king, and Margaret, aunt to the emperor, to whose mediation this important affair was entrusted, met at Cambray, and after many difficulties, came at length to an accommodation, which was greatly accelerated by the good offices of the English ambassadors. * Henry, who had some favourite purposes to serve by the conclusion of this treaty, was so much delighted with the part which More had acted, that he caused the Duke of Norfolk, on a public occasion, to express how much both himself and his kingdom were indebted to his able negociation. †

As Latin was, in that age, the chief language for ^{in public speeches.} the intercourse not only of the learned, but of governments, the readiness and elegance with which it was spoken by More brought his services, on public occasions, into great request. Thus we find him replying, with much applause, in the name of Henry, at one time to the ambassador of France, ‡ at another to those studied harangues with which

* Herbert, p. 231.

† Roper, p. 21. Hoddesdon, p. 42.

‡ Herbert, p. 152.

the universities were accustomed to receive the visits of their sovereign. * The ceremonious splendour of such occasions was ill suited to his taste, but he seems to have been by no means averse to displays of unpremeditated eloquence ; for we are told, that when he came to any foreign university in the course of his embassies, he usually requested to be present at the public Latin disputations held in these seats of learning ; and sometimes mixing in the contests which he had come to witness, astonished the audience by his fluency and learning. †

Opinion of
Henry.

Henry meantime continued to show him new and still more flattering marks of esteem and friendship. Pleased to exchange the ceremonious splendour of a court for the charms of More's domestic society, the monarch would occasionally come, without any previous notice, to spend the day at Chelsea, and partake in the private entertainments of his minister. These tokens of royal favour were not, however, overvalued by More. He felt no elevation at being made subservient to the pleasures even of his sovereign ; and he knew Henry's disposition too well not to be sensible that his attachment was the mere transient impulse of the moment. An anecdote strongly expressive of these sentiments is preserved. The king having one day paid him an unexpected visit to dinner, and having afterwards

* More, p. 60. Roper, p. 13. † More, p. 60.

walked with him for an hour in the garden, with his arm round his neck, Mr. Roper, son-in-law to More, took occasion, after Henry was gone, to congratulate him on his rare good fortune, in being treated by the king with a degree of familiarity never experienced by any other subject. "I thank our Lord," replied More, "I find his Grace my very good lord indeed; and I believe he doth as singularly favour me as any subject in this realm. However, son Roper, I may tell thee, I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France, it would not fail to be struck off." *

Yet More, while thus aware of the capricious and headlong violence of Henry, had already found himself obliged to dissent from him in a point where the passions of the monarch were deeply interested. Prince Arthur, his elder brother, had been married, at the early age of fifteen, to Catharine, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella, but had died a few months after the celebration of his marriage. On this occasion, his father, in whom avarice was the supreme passion, unable to endure that the large dowry of Catharine, amounting to two hundred thousand ducats, should be carried back to Spain, procured a dispensation from the pope, and compelled his second son, Henry, to be

Proposed
divorce of
Queen Ca-
tharine.

* Roper, p. 13.

affianced to the infanta. The prince, though only twelve years of age, is said to have been extremely averse to this unusual contract, but could not, at his early age, make any effectual resistance to the determined purpose of his father. On his accession to the throne, at the age of eighteen, as his marriage had not yet been celebrated, it was warmly debated in the council of state whether he ought to fulfil his early contract. It could scarcely be considered as binding upon him, since he had been forced into it in his nonage. The marriage was somewhat ineligible from the greater age of the lady, which exceeded his own by six years, and seriously objectionable, from her former union with his brother. On the other hand, her amiable disposition, her affection for Henry, her large dower, and the advantages of maintaining a close alliance with Spain, were strongly urged in favour of fulfilling the contract, and these considerations at length prevailed with the council.

Henry lived many years very happily with Catharine, and was much won by the unvaried sweetness of her temper; yet circumstances too often occurred to remind him of their unusual, and, as it was accounted, unnatural connection. The marriage of a brother with the widow of his brother, a union so repugnant to the customs of all Christian nations, and solemnly prohibited by a law founded on evident expediency, was looked upon with a de-

gree of horror ; nor could the dispensation of the pope, now much less regarded than formerly, efface this general impression. Even Henry VII. himself, whose avarice had occasioned the contract, is said to have discovered an intention to take some favourable opportunity of having it annulled, * and on his deathbed to have charged his son not to complete a union so unusual, and repugnant to the laws of God and man. † Warham, the primate, a man of great learning and authority, had, with some others, openly declared against the resolution of the council, which approved the marriage ; and similar sentiments had been avowed by foreign governments. A treaty being entered into for the espousal of Mary, the issue of this marriage, with the French king or the Duke of Orleans, the ambassador of that nation directly objected to the legitimacy of the princess, on account of the unprecedented relation of her parents. ‡ Even the Emperor Charles, although her cousin-germain, had attempted to evade a similar contract by the same objection. §

The impression made by these circumstances on Henry's mind, although slight at first, was in process of time greatly aggravated by various consider-

* Hume, from Morison's *Apomaxis*, p. 13.

† Hume, from *ibid.* Heylin's *Queen Mary*, p. 2. See also Herbert, p. 208.

‡ Herbert, p. 191. § *Ibid.*

ations. If Mary's legitimacy could be called in question, it was apprehended that the King of Scotland, the next heir, would, on the death of Henry, lay claim to the crown, and replunge the nation into those civil wars from which it had so lately emerged. His confessor, influenced by Wolsey, who had at that time some private purposes to serve by a dissolution of the marriage, contrived to infuse new doubts into his mind ; and when he afterwards applied to his bishops for a solution of his scruples, he found them all, with the exception of Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, fully satisfied of the unlawfulness of the marriage. Heaven itself, indeed, seemed to him to have pronounced a similar sentence ; for although Catharine had born him several children, yet they had all died in early infancy, except one daughter ; a calamity which struck him the more, because the curse of being childless is the very threatening denounced in the law of Moses against those who marry a brother's widow. At the same time, the decay of the queen's beauty, and certain distempers which increased with her years, contributed, by diminishing the king's affection for her, to augment his scruples. *

But all his apprehensions of the illegitimacy of his marriage were converted into certainties, by the appearance at court of Anne Boleyn, a young

* Herbert, p. 194.

lady connected with the most noble families of the kingdom, yet far more distinguished by her beauty and accomplishments than by her rank. Having been appointed one of the queen's maids of honour, she was frequently in the company of Henry, and soon attracted his notice by the charms of her person, and the captivating vivacity of her conversation. The result of these interviews was a passion, which, in his warm temperament, quickly became predominant; and as he found her virtue proof against all licentious advances, he conceived an irresistible desire to gratify his wishes by raising her to the throne.* From this period, the reign-

* From the frequent murder or divorce of his wives, to make room for others, it has been strangely supposed that Henry entertained some scruples about concubinage, and that an aversion to libertinism at least may be accounted among his virtues. How far this opinion is well founded will appear from the following passage in the history of his life, which seems to have been overlooked by modern writers:—"One of the liberties which our king took at his spare time was to love. For as all recommendable parts concurred in his person, and they, again, were exalted in his high dignity and valour; so it must seem less strange, if, amid the many fair ladies which lived in his court, he both gave and received temptation. Among whom, because Elizabeth Blunt, daughter to Sir John Blunt, knight, was thought, for her rare ornaments of nature and education, to be the beauty and mistress-piece of her time, that entire affection passed betwixt them, as at late she bore him a son. This child proving so equally alike to both parents, that he became the best emblem of their mutual affection, was called Henry Fitzroy by the king, and so much avowed by him, that, having now attained the age of six years, he was made a knight publicly, and

ing object of his mind was to procure the dissolution of his marriage with Catharine. He applied to the pope to annul the dispensation which had been granted by his predecessor, a request with which Clement VII. who then held the apostolic chair, had many weighty reasons to comply ; and although his terror of the emperor's displeasure made him invent many pretences to delay a final decision, yet his promises and professions led Henry to look with confidence to a favourable result.

While things continued in this undetermined state, the king, anxious that the opinion of his subjects should coincide with his in a point where their support might become indispensably necessary, exerted himself to gain over to his side the persons of most influence in the nation, and was especially

the same day created Earl of Nottingham, Duke of Richmond and Somerset, and Lieutenant-General beyond the Trent, and Warden-General of the Borders of Scotland, and, shortly after, Admiral of England. After which he was first bred up together with Henry, Earl of Surrey, in the Castle of Windsor, which the earl elegantly describes in a sonnet extant in his works ; from whence, November 1532, they went both together to study at Paris ; which acquaintance and friendship was endeared again by a match of the said duke with Mary, the earl's sister, by whom he yet had no issue. Howbeit, I find he was very personable, and of great expectation, insomuch that he was thought, not only for ability of body, but mind, to be one of the rarest of his time ; for which reason also, he was much cherished by our king, as also because he had no issue male by the queen, nor did, perchance, expect any." Herbert, p. 137.

solicitous that his divorce should have the sanction of More. The high estimation in which the talents, and still more the integrity of this minister, were held at home and abroad, rendered his voice of much importance. All felt that his penetration and judgment, experienced as he was in intricate discussions of law and theology, were not likely to be led astray; and all were convinced, that no opinion different from his real sentiments could be drawn from him either by fear or complaisance.

But, in the present instance, his decision was by no means favourable to the views of the monarch.

The opinion of More, contrary to the king's wish.

He probably looked on the laws prohibiting marriage between near degrees of kindred as founded merely on expediency, and capable of being laid aside, without moral turpitude, when interfering with the welfare of nations, or the security of governments; and he seems to have thought that the pope, whose power he accounted extremely salutary in regulating the affairs of religion and morality, was fully competent to authorize this departure. At the same time, he foresaw many great evils which might ensue from the king's divorce. To an amiable and meritorious queen, the loss of her husband and her throne was an act of cruel injustice; and while her daughter suffered no less severely from the deprivation of her rights of succession, her disputed title (for many could never be brought to acquiesce in the proposed measure)

would scarcely fail at some future period to throw the nation again into civil convulsions. Nor was it only at home that the country was likely to suffer from the prosecution of the divorce ; the emperor, then the most powerful prince in Europe, would probably avenge the degradation of his aunt by open hostilities.

From a mature consideration of these circumstances, the opinion which More formed was decidedly in favour of the legitimacy of the marriage, and the impropriety of a divorce ; nor could Henry, either by private conversations, or by the assistance of able men, prevail on him to alter his sentiments. Yet he listened to their arguments with so much attention, replied to them with so much calmness, and maintained his dissent with such unaffected mildness, that even the impetuous and violent Henry was mortified without being displeased at his want of success. More entreated the king to consider his refusal to sanction the marriage as proceeding from conviction, and not from any want of inclination to promote the pleasure of his sovereign. If he abandoned his integrity to serve an occasion, he should be unworthy of the confidence with which he was honoured ; that, however, he by no means considered his own opinion as the standard of truth, or to be depended on in opposition to those of so many wise and learned men ; and that his Majesty would readily

find, among his other counsellors, persons whose sentiments coincided with his views, and who were better qualified, by their opinions and influence, to promote them. Henry, moved by the candour and moderation of this address, declared that More should retain his opinions unmolested, and, although not permitted, by his conviction, to serve him on this occasion, should continue to enjoy his favour unabated. *

The delays which the pope studiously interposed, to prevent the question of the divorce from being brought to a decision, at length ruined the credit of Wolsey, whom the king had entrusted with the conduct of this affair. The high opinion of his abilities, with which this favourite had inspired the monarch, made Henry attribute his present failure to want rather of inclination than of power; and the influence of Anne Boleyn, who looked upon him as her principal enemy, precipitated his fall. He was stript of his offices and wealth; and after a career of authority and grandeur almost too great for a subject, was made to feel how worthless are the highest honours which depend on the caprice of an arbitrary prince.

About this time More, having acted his part in the negotiations at Cambray so much to the king's satisfaction, had returned to court; and Henry

Created
Chancellor.

* Roper, p. 28.

October 25,
1529.

having now, by the fall of Wolsey, the chancellorship at his disposal, gladly seized the opportunity of conferring that high office on More. No appointment could have been more popular, since no one stood so high in the public opinion for integrity, industry, and experience, both in legal and political business. To More, it was the more honourable, that it had for several reigns been conferred exclusively on dignified ecclesiastics; and the few instances in which, in the course of our history, it had been given to laymen, were now almost wholly forgotten. That nothing might be omitted which could do honour to the new chancellor, the Duke of Norfolk, at his installation, delivered, by the king's command, an oration, which, after displaying the eminent services of More, concludes with the following words, so remarkable to be dictated by an arbitrary sovereign, and spoken by the first peer of his realm: "It may, perhaps, seem to many a strange and unusual matter, that this dignity should be bestowed upon a layman, none of the nobility, and one that hath wife and children, because heretofore but singular learned prelates, or men of greatest nobility, have possessed the place: But what is wanting in these respects, the admirable virtue, the matchless gifts of wit and wisdom of this man, doth most fully recompense. For the king's majesty hath not regarded how great, but what a man he was; he hath cast

his eyes not on the nobility of his blood, but on the worth of his person ; he hath respected his sufficiency, not his profession ; finally, he would shew by this choice, that he hath some rare subjects among the row of gentlemen and laymen, who deserve to manage the highest offices in the realm, which bishops and nobles think they only can deserve." *

But this elevation, however honourable, was far from agreeable to More. He felt that, while the height to which he was now raised must necessarily render him more obnoxious to Henry's caprice, it was no longer in his power to avoid the storm, by withholding his opinion. His duty, he was aware, would soon call on him to dissent openly from a measure, to which he saw the king more vehemently impelled ; and we have already seen the consequences which his knowledge of Henry's character led him in such an event to expect. But as the imperfect reasons which he could venture to state, for declining the office, produced no impression on the king, and his acceptance of it was unavoidable ; he seems to have resolved, as the only course by which he could reconcile public usefulness with personal safety, to devote himself assiduously to his duties as a judge, and to interfere as little as possible in affairs of state. For though the chancellor-

* Roper, p. 22. Hodgesdon, p. 47.

Ministerial
functions in
that age.

ship was considered the highest civil station in the kingdom, and he, who occupied it, as the prime minister, or principal adviser of his sovereign ; yet there were various circumstances which, at that period, enabled its possessor to withdraw, in a considerable degree, from public transactions. There existed then no such character as that of a minister, regularly responsible for the acts of government, and supposed, in virtue of his office, to direct all the principal measures adopted under his administration. The king might, at that period, have been called his own prime minister ; the measures of his government flowed not only nominally, but really from himself ; and the business of his ministers was either to execute his orders, or assist him with their advice when he thought proper to require it. Sometimes an individual, by his superior talents, and much more frequently by artifice, acquired such an ascendancy over the mind of his sovereign, that he was enabled, like Wolsey, to order the affairs of government at his pleasure. But as this exercise of authority was not in virtue of any regular office, he was often thwarted in his views, often obliged to acquiesce in measures undertaken in opposition to his sentiments ; nor was he considered as in any degree responsible to parliament for acts which he was not deemed able to control. A disgraced minister was often prosecuted before that assembly for the transactions of his

administration ; but this, far from an act of public justice, was merely a display of royal vengeance against a person who had incurred the king's displeasure. If the ruin of the victim was once resolved on, innocence was no protection : he was prosecuted for measures which the king had dictated, and both Houses of Parliament had sanctioned, as well as for those which could be justly ascribed to himself.

But while the king took so great a share in the direction of the state, the affairs of government were far less important and complicated than in later times. Even the foreign transactions, although the principal business of state, required no very constant nor eminent exertion of talent. The politicians of Italy were, indeed, already busied in adjusting a balance of power ; and while all the courts of Europe were filled with intrigues to confirm or counteract these arrangements, Henry boasted, that, as France and Spain divided the power of the Continent between them, England had the glory of holding the balance. But if the scales continued to maintain their equipoise, it was to be attributed to very different causes from the discretion of the umpire, who was ready to throw his weight into either, according to the views, the passion, or the caprice of the moment. Such was the poverty and internal disunion of those extensive empires, that they could not bring into the field,

far less maintain for a considerable time, a sufficient body of troops to produce material injury to each other ; and England, by joining with either, was more than secure against the adverse power.

The other departments of the executive government, divided at present among so many principal officers of state, were then of little comparative importance. While an army was merely a temporary levy, raised in haste by some crude and violent methods which custom had sanctioned, a navy was chiefly a collection of vessels hired or impressed into the service of government for some particular attempt, and manned almost wholly with soldiers. The arduous business of taxation was then unknown : the ordinary revenues of the king were derived from his own demesnes, from certain feudal fines, or from a few ancient imposts ; his extraordinary expences were defrayed by contributions imposed by Parliament, and levied after a certain customary form.* To regulate the ceremonial of the court, to superintend the police, and to ward against plots or insurrections, were in those days the chief duties of ministers ; for the vast business of colonies formed as yet no part of the cares of administration.

In such a state of things, government could

* These forms were denominated subsidies, tenths, fifteenths, &c.

be conducted even by a hot-headed arbitrary prince, without much interference from experienced ministers ; and the situation of public affairs was now peculiarly free from difficulties. The Continent had been restored to peace ; the nation enjoyed perfect tranquillity at home ; Henry, having abandoned his early predilection for expensive armaments, was not in particular want of money ; his attention was diverted from all schemes of ambition, and his mind wholly occupied with the business of his divorce, and the charms of Anne Boleyn.

Enabled by all these circumstances to turn his thoughts without distraction to the legal duties of his office, More soon drew on himself the admiration of his countrymen. Wolsey had presided in the Court of Chancery with much ability, and, as far as regarded himself, with unimpeached integrity ; but as he had a pitiful ambition to efface from the minds of men all recollection of his origin, by the excess of his pomp and arrogance, it was hardly possible for a person of common rank to procure admittance to his presence without bribes to his attendants. The suitors in Chancery were thus deprived of their rights, or plundered of their money, scarcely less than if the judge had administered justice to those only who could win him by bribes, or awe him by their rank. The conduct of More was in every thing, except integrity, the

very reverse of Wolsey's. Resolved that no man who had been wronged should have to purchase justice, and that the poor and helpless, who stood most in need of the protection of the laws, should not be defrauded of their rights, he took precautions that every one should have direct and immediate access to his court; and in proportion as a suitor was poorer, meaner, or more unprotected, he was received with more affability, his business heard with more attention, and dispatched with more readiness. Aware, however, that even this demeanour was not sufficient to ensure justice to all; that the expence of solicitors, and the necessary writings, as well as the regular fees of office, frequently deterred men from prosecuting a just claim; and that the suits *in forma pauperis*, which had lately been granted,* were but very lamely supported, it was his custom to sit every afternoon in his open hall, where every one who had any suit to prefer was allowed to come without any form or writing whatever, and explain his claims in person.†

Although he thus brought on himself a load of causes, which he might have avoided by rendering his court more difficult of access, such was his indefatigable diligence, that he proceeded rapidly in clearing away the arrears of his predecessors. On

* By 11 H. VII. cap. 12.

† Roper, p. 24.

his appointment to the chancellorship, he had found his court encumbered by a vast accumulation of suits, some of which had been there near twenty years; yet he had held the office only two years, when, on determining a certain cause, and calling for the next to be heard, he was answered that there was not one more depending. This circumstance, which had perhaps never occurred before since the institution of the court, he caused to be entered on record.*

The most unpleasant and invidious part of his labours was to remedy the abuses of the courts of ^{Dispute with the} common law, from whose judgments relief was continually prayed. Though he granted no injunction, and allowed no subpoena to be issued, till he had carefully examined the bill, his interferences, in these days of partial decisions, became so frequent, as at length to excite the complaints of the judges. Informed of their dissatisfaction, he requested their attendance at a conference; and, producing a list of all the injunctions which he had ever issued, as well as the reasons which had influenced him to interpose, he desired them to point out the instances in which he had improperly interfered. A perusal of this document having,

* Augustus, after a lapse of some hundred years, closed the Temple of Janus for the second time: Shall posterity have to wait as long for a legal Augustus to give a second clearance to our Court of Chancery?

however, convinced them that their complaints were as unfounded as their sentences had been unjustifiable, he assured them, that no office could be more ungrateful to him than to interfere with their judgments, and, as a proof of his sincerity, promised to desist entirely, provided they would engage to exert their own authority in remedying these abuses. But they having, as More indignantly observed, their own purposes to serve in directing such judgments, while they were secured, by the verdict of a jury, from all responsibility, declined this equitable proposal. *

Integrity ;

The inflexible integrity and disinterestedness of More became proverbial ; for while he would allow none of his friends, or the officers of his court, to burden the suitors by receiving presents, no hopes or fears, or even the affections of kindred and friendship, were ever known to bias his judgment. An instance is mentioned, in which he made a decree directly against one of his sons-in-law, who, trusting to the favour of so near a relative, had refused to submit his cause to arbitration. † Another of his sons-in-law having, between jest and earnest, complained that he did not allow his friends to make any profit under him ; not that he, for his part, would be guilty of perverting justice, but that

* Roper, p. 24, 25. Hoddlesdon, p. 57.

† Roper, p. 24.

he saw no harm in receiving a small present for speaking in behalf of suitors : More applauded the scrupulousness of his conscience, and told him that he should endeavour to provide for him otherwise ; “ for this one thing I assure you,” said he, “ that if the parties will call for justice at my hands, then, though it were my father, whom I love so dearly, stood on one side, and the devil stood on the other, his cause being just, the devil of me should have his due.” * “ For your sake,” he would say to his children, “ I will do justice to all men, and leave you a blessing.” †

The disinterestedness of More was no less conspicuous as a courtier than as a judge. The mere salary of his office was all that he enjoyed from the public ; and although he stood so high in the favour of his prince, that nothing would have been refused him, yet he could, after his retirement, declare, that he had never asked one penny for himself or his friends. ‡ His few requests to the king were chiefly in favour of those engaged in literature and the fine arts, who could not, without the assistance of patronage, continue those pursuits which were to reflect lustre on their age. Among others who shared his protection was Holbein, the celebrated painter. This artist, who was a native

His disinterestedness ;

Patronage of the arts ;

* Roper, p. 23. Hoddesdon, p. 56.

† Lives of the Lords Chancellors, Vol. I. p. 71. ‡ Roper, p. 15.

of Switzerland, having come over to England recommended to More by Erasmus, experienced a most flattering reception from the chancellor, who was warmly attached to the fine arts, and still more to Erasmus. * He kept Holbein upwards of two years in his own house, gave him encouragement to paint many beautiful pictures, of which some are preserved to the present times ; and even found means to attract towards him the king's particular attention. Having, with this view, hung up all the artist's pieces in his great hall, disposed in the best order, and placed in the most favourable light, he invited Henry to an entertainment. The king, on entering the hall, was greatly struck with this display of painting ; and when he inquired eagerly whether such an artist was now alive, and to be had for money, More embraced this opportunity of presenting Holbein to his Majesty. Henry immediately took him into his service, and soon brought him into high reputation and employment among persons of distinction. †

* Erasmus made a present of his picture to More, and sent it over by Holbein, who had painted it. More sent Erasmus, in return, a groupe, including himself and his whole family, by the same artist. Jortin's *Life of Erasmus*, Vol. I. p. 489.

† Among the numerous works of this celebrated artist, none, perhaps, are more noted than the groupes of Sir Thomas More's family ; but very good reasons have been assigned for supposing, that though the heads were sketched by Holbein, the pictures were finished by an inferior artist. *Anecdotes of Painting*, Vol. I. p. 85.

But while More was thus displaying, in his exalted station, the same virtues which he had exhibited in a private condition, he became unfortunately involved in the 'theological controversies of the times, and, by the part which he bore in them, ^{Religious controversies;} sullied that fame on which even envy could fix no other stain. We have seen that his religious creed made an early and deep impression on his mind; that even the most liberal studies were unable to shake his veneration for many superstitious observances; and that he was prevented, chiefly by diffidence in his own virtue, from devoting his life to the severities of a monastic order. But although he pursued a lay profession, he had all the devotion of an exemplary priest. His ordinary conversation was indeed lively and full of humour; but he would occasionally, with a solemnity the more impressive from its contrast with his usual cheerfulness, remind his family of the duties they owed to their Creator, of the uncertainty of human life, the vanity of earthly pleasures, and the improvement of affliction.* His attachment to religion and its services was open and avowed; and, while he constantly attended divine service at his parish church

The most noted of these pictures is at Burford, in Oxfordshire, the seat of the Lenthalls; another was purchased by Sir Rowland Wynne, who carried it to his seat in Yorkshire. Lyson's *Environons of London*, Vol. II. p. 81.

* Roper, p. 16.

of Chelsea, he often assisted in its celebration. The Duke of Norfolk coming one day to dine with him, found him at church, dressed in a surplice, and singing with the choir: "How!" said his Grace, as they returned from worship, "my lord chancellor a parish clerk! you dishonour the king and his office." "Nay," replied More, "think not your master and mine dishonoured by my serving God, his master."* Even when engaged in the utmost hurry of private or public business, it was his constant custom, when at home, to read the psalms and litany with his wife and children: and, in the evening, to go with his whole family into his chapel, where the psalms and collects were devoutly rehearsed.† In this chapel, which he had erected at a short distance from his house, with a gallery and library, he sometimes sequestered himself even from his own family, and gave his mind wholly up to serious meditation. There were few days on which he did not here spend an interval in study and devotion, and the whole of Friday he anxiously sought thus to appropriate in solitude.‡

Yet was his piety cheerful and unaffected, free from all moroseness, and perfectly uncontaminated with ostentation. When his mind had become expanded by the cultivation of literature, and by a

* Roper, p. 29. Hoddesdon, p. 66. More, p. 17

† Stapleton, p. 248.

‡ Roper, p. 15

more extensive knowledge of mankind, his religious sentiments seem to have been remarkable for their liberality. * He represents it as an inviolable maxim with his Utopians, that no man ought to be punished for his religion : and while every one was allowed to believe, without inquiry or molestation, whatever his own understanding approved, he was prohibited, not only from committing injury or insult towards those of a different creed, but even from attempting to make proselytes by any other means than the most gentle persuasion. To accommodate the public worship to these liberal institutions, every form and prayer in his imaginary republic was conceived in such a manner, that no one who believed in the existence of a God could scruple to join in it. No images were admitted into their temples, no adoration paid there unless to God alone ; and while the members of every sect were allowed to perform their peculiar ceremonies without control, in their own private houses, they were prevented from disturbing the general harmony, by obtruding them on the public attention.† As to the establishment and authority of the priest-

* Picus of Mirandola, whom he so much admired, was distinguished for the freedom of his religious opinions. He was, during his whole lifetime, persecuted by the devotees of Rome, with charges of heresy, and perhaps saved from their hands only by his rank.

† Utopia, lib. ii.

hood, the institutions of the Utopians were more distant from the Romish church than those of Luther, or even than those of Calvin; since the clergy were chosen by the people, and invested with no further power than to exclude the desperately wicked from joining in the public worship.

Were we, indeed, to judge of More from the sentiments which he delivers in the *Utopia*, we might consider him as a reformer, both of religious creeds and of church government, whose plans were too liberal to be carried into execution. In comparing the institutions of *Utopia* with those of Christendom, he omits no opportunity to render the Romish priesthood the butt of his humour. He takes occasion to compliment the activity of those *holy men* the abbots, who are not content with living at their ease, and doing no good, but must needs do positive mischief. He introduces Cardinal Morton's jester laying plans for clearing the nation of idleness and beggary. As the most appropriate receptacle, the male beggars are to be distributed among the Benedictines, as lay-brothers, and the females are to become nuns; while he considers the friars as provided for by a statute which enacts, that all vagabonds should be taken up and put to hard labour.* So ridiculous is the view he exhibits of the folly, ill-breeding, and ma-

* *Utopia*, p. 87.

lice of these friars, that the publishers of the Utopia took care to strike the passage out of some later editions. * As to the whole body of preachers, he makes no scruple of charging them with practising upon the Christian doctrine, and accommodating it to their own lives, since they could not bring their lives to correspond with its precepts. Even the heads of the church do not escape his sarcasms. Ascribing the great respect paid to treaties in modern Europe to the good example set by the popes to other princes, he ironically panegyrises the perfidious Alexander VI. and Julius II. for their religious observance of good faith.

Nor is it only in his Utopia that we find these free strictures. His letters to Erasmus and his other friends abound with invectives against the vices of the monks, and the corruptions introduced both into the doctrines and the government of the Christian church.

But although More could entertain such liberal sentiments of religion, he does not appear to have formed any systematic ideas of a thorough reformation; and with whatever detestation he looked on the vices of the priesthood, and the corruptions of the Christian faith, he seems not to have been aware how extensive and radical a change was required for their correction. He could endure

* Burnet, Hist. of Ref. III. 29.

the keen raillery and pointed sarcasms of Erasmus, and heartily join in the laugh against the clergy; but when Luther, disdaining these slow and indirect modes of attack, boldly stood forward to arraign not only the vices but the pretensions of the church of Rome, rousing his followers to throw off her yoke, and oppose, by every power of mind and body, whatever their consciences could not approve, the daring nature of these measures, and the consequences which ensued, seem to have given too violent a shock to the prejudices of More. He could ridicule the coarse fictions of the priesthood, and the absurd importance attached to external observances; but it was too much to see every article of his early creed outraged, and all the rites, which had been consecrated to him by habit, ignominiously trampled under foot. Averse, besides, both from feeling and principle, to war and violence of every description, he was taught, by the recent miseries of his own country, to look with horror on those struggles which result from civil convulsions. But, in the consequences of Luther's doctrines he could anticipate only one vast scene of confusion and bloodshed. While, on the one hand, the Roman hierarchy, strong by her wealth and splendour, and still stronger by the hold which habitual veneration had given her on the minds of men, was resolutely determined to employ the arm of authority in defence of her power and pre-

tensions, the reformed, on the other hand, seemed resolved to shake this mighty fabric to the foundation, and to assert their religious liberty at the price of their blood. The violent commotions that had already taken place in Germany seemed the prelude to a universal and dreadful conflict. *

Nor was the conduct of some among the reformed calculated to attain the approbation of the moderate and pious. While the well-informed and virtuous behaved as became the happy partakers of so great an amelioration, a portion of the multitude, on throwing off the trammels of the Romish creed, seemed to wanton in the licence and extravagance of their religious opinions. The minds of men, escaped from the galling yoke of superstition and despotism, and wild with the possession of a new and imperfectly understood liberty, were apt to run into the opposite extreme of unbounded licentiousness. Some proposed to give up the Christian faith entirely, and to raise their creed on the broad foundations of deism:† others, while they pretended to continue among the followers of

* The following passage from a letter of More to Erasmus plainly shows, that the convulsions he apprehended from their innovations were the principal cause of his hatred to heretics:—
 “*Nam omnino sic illud genus hominum odi, ut illis, nisi resipiscunt, tam invisus esse velim, quam cui maxime, quippe quos indies magis et magis experior tales, ut mundo ab illis vehementer metum.*” Ep. 466.

† Herbert, p. 238.

Christ, insulted his religion by notions which outraged the human understanding. To some it did not appear enough to cast off the authority of the church of Rome, to inquire and think freely for themselves, and to assert their civil, in conjunction with their religious liberty ; they were ready to call in question all authority, however necessary for the security of society, to own no law but the guidance of their own caprice, no obligation but the impulse of their own desires. They began even to announce a commission from heaven to make proselytes by the sword. Such were the frantic tenets of Muncer and his followers, which afterwards led to the enormities of the Anabaptists at Munster. *

More was unable to view these excesses with the steady eye of an enlightened philosopher. Not aware that they were the necessary attendants of a revolution in the opinions of men, which would lead to the most important advantages, he did not perceive that society could not, without many temporary convulsions, recoil from the unnatural state into which it had been forcibly bent by ignorance and imposture. As the communication of

* The mad tenets and flagitious conduct of a portion of this sect, at that period, appear to have had a powerful effect in exciting the opposition of More to the Reformation. See a letter to Cochleus in Stapleton, p. 209.

knowledge was studiously discouraged both by the church and state; it required a violent effort even to assert the right of procuring instruction ; and a further period of ignorance and error had necessarily to elapse, before men could avail themselves of the knowledge thus painfully acquired. Impressed more forcibly by the immediate disasters of the Reformation than by the incalculable advantages which it was preparing for future ages, More could not discern the fruits of that literature which he himself had so successfully laboured to disseminate. Even Erasmus, the great restorer of learning, feared more than he hoped from the Reformation, and, like More, was unable to rise to the energy of Luther's mind.

Instead of looking forward to the success of the reformers for the termination of those convulsions with which the Christian world was threatened, More could see no safety but in stopping their progress. Imagining that a full acknowledgment of the authority of the clergy, and a unanimous submission to the decisions of the pope, were the most likely means to restore tranquillity, he looked to the suppression of heresy as the first and most urgent care ; while, miscalculating the obstinacy of the priesthood, he trusted that the abuses of the church might, in a period of general quiet, be corrected without exciting convulsions. Impressed with these sentiments, and connected with

the leading adherents of popery in England, it was impossible for him, in the present circumstances, to remain a silent spectator. Luther and his followers having begun to avail themselves, with much industry, of the assistance of the press in propagating their opinions, and having evidently a great advantage in argument and eloquence over their opponents, the literary acquirements of More pointed out to him the task of replying to their representations, as the most effectual manner in which he could serve the cause of the church.* But his theological knowledge was by no means equal to his eloquence. He was imperfectly acquainted with the history of the church;† and although sufficiently versed in some of the fathers, and in the questions of scholastic divinity, he had never searched, with the keen eye of an inquirer, to the foundation of his religious opinions. Proving, with these disadvantages, a very unequal match for Luther and the other reformed divines, who had made the most profound researches into the subjects in dispute, he had recourse to the usual practice of controversialists, who find themselves beset by arguments which they know not how to answer: He grew angry where he should have begun to doubt, and endeavoured to hide the defects of his

* Stapleton, p. 189.

† Burnet, Hist of Reform. edit. 1715. Vol. I. p. 155.

reasoning in the confidence of his assertions, and the virulence of his abuse. The scurrility of his controversial tracts exceeded even the usual coarseness of that age ; and it was said, that they ought to have procured him only the reputation of having the best knack of any man in Europe at calling bad names in good Latin. * The easy and natural flow of his style, a perpetual succession of humorous allusions, joined to a happy art of placing his own opinions in the fairest light, and of holding up those of his adversary to ridicule, were, however, sufficient to render his tracts extremely popular.

But while his mind was thus heated with controversy, and his passions excited by the applause of the Catholics on the one hand, and the abuse of the Protestants on the other, the power placed in his hands as Lord Chancellor, unfortunately afforded him an opportunity of displaying his zeal otherwise than by polemical writings. It is said to have been at his instigation that the king at length put in force those laws against heretics, of which Wolsey, either from hatred to the clergy, or from a better motive, had retarded the execution. † As the Lord Chancellor presided in the court of the Star Chamber, before which those accused of here-

His persecution of the Protestants.

* Atterbury's Considerations upon the Spirit of Martin Luther.

† Burnet, Hist. of Ref. Vol. I. p. 153, from Fox.

sy were then often brought, More had, in his official capacity, an opportunity of exercising much severity against the favourers of the Reformation. James Bainham, a gentleman of the Temple, was carried to the Chancellor's house, where much pains were taken to persuade him to discover such of his fellow Templars as inclined to the new opinions; but fair means not prevailing, More is said to have made him be whipt in his presence, and afterwards conveyed to the Tower, where, it has been said, he looked on and saw him put to the rack.* Various other cruelties were charged upon him by the Protestants, and he was in consequence considered as a principal persecutor.

Of these accusations some were denied by More; and his integrity can allow us to entertain no scruple in receiving his testimony; yet many of the severities which he committed against the reformed can neither be disputed nor palliated. We have only to regret the darkness in which superstition may envelope the clearest understanding; to lament the obstinacy with which the best men may cling to prejudices which early and inveterate habits have rendered sacred in their eyes; to deplore the excesses into which even the most generous dispositions may be hurried, if they once engage in controversies where opposition and sarcasm sting

* Burnet, Hist. of Ref. Vol. I. p. 158, from Fox.

their feelings and goad their passions. When these causes could impel even More to sanguinary cruelties, what tragedies may they not be expected to produce? In him a natural mildness had been improved by enlightened studies, and confirmed by deliberate habits of complacency and forbearance. In regard to religious liberty, he had at one time expressed ideas not only far beyond the age in which he lived, but even more liberal than may still be thought consistent with practice. He would have no man persecuted, or in any way molested for his religious opinions; he would even have nothing introduced into the national worship, by which any man's understanding or prejudices could be shocked; while, at the same time, every one was permitted to hold whatever opinions, and to perform whatever ceremonies, he pleased, in company with those of his own persuasion.* Such were once the sentiments of More; and yet even this man could, by a fatal gradation, become a religious persecutor.

But while we censure his conduct, we must respect the purity of his motives. Neither the love of power, or fame, or affluence, had any share in urging him to the support of the Catholic religion, or the persecution of the reformed; all that he did was from mistaken principle. Several inci-

Disinterested
zeal.

* See Utopia.

dents are related which place in a striking point of view his disinterestedness, and the benefits which he anticipated from the extirpation of heresy. As he walked one day with his son-in-law, Mr Roper, by the river at Chelsea, and discoursed very seriously on the state of public affairs, he suddenly pointed to the water, and said, with much earnestness, that, on condition that three things were well accomplished, he would to God he were presently thrown into the Thames ! Roper, surprised at this strong expression, and the unusual eagerness of his manner, requested to know the objects which he so earnestly desired. " The first," said More, " is, that whereas the greatest part of Christian princes are now at mortal war, they were at universal peace. The second, that whereas the church of Christ is at this time grievously afflicted with many errors and heresies, it were settled in a perfect uniformity of religion. The third is, that whereas the king's marriage is now brought in question, it were to the glory of God, and the satisfaction of all parties, well concluded." * From these words we perceive the strong aversion which he entertained to all dissensions that might interrupt the harmony of society, and subject mankind to new calamities. Unhappily he numbered in this class those noble struggles for freedom of opinion, which,

* Roper, p. 14.

in violent but temporary agitation, lay the basis of permanent tranquillity.

Another anecdote shows the disinterestedness of his religious zeal. His treatises in defence of the Romish church were thought to have done essential service to the cause ; and as it was known that he had taken no advantage of the opportunities afforded by his high office to amass wealth, the clergy in convocation resolved, as a mark of their gratitude, to present him with a gift of four or five thousand pounds, a sum equal to more than twenty thousand in our times. To show him every possible mark of respect, three bishops, among whom was his particular friend, Tonstall, Bishop of Durham, were deputed to wait upon him in the name of the whole body, and to request his acceptance of this testimony of their gratitude. More expressed his satisfaction that his labours were approved by so many wise and learned men ; but he absolutely refused their present, declaring that he would never accept of any reward for his religious writings but at the hands of God. With the same constancy he rejected the entreaties of the prelates, that he would permit them to offer the present to his family. " So much," said he, " do I value my pleasure above my profit, that I would not, for a much larger sum, have lost the rest of so many nights as were spent upon these writings. Yet notwithstanding, upon condition that all heresies

were suppressed, I would that all my books were burnt, and my labour entirely lost." *

Difficulties
relative to
the Divorce.

But while More continued to execute the office of Chancellor with so much honour to himself, unless where religion was concerned, and even there, with the approbation of his own conscience, Henry's impatience for the completion of his divorce became every day more urgent. Finding the court of Rome resolved to put off the decision of his suit as long as possible, without any assurance that the ultimate verdict would be favourable to his wishes, he began to look around for some other authority to justify that course to which he was impelled by his passions. At the suggestion of Cranmer, afterwards Primate of England, he sent to consult the learned in the most celebrated seats of literature throughout Europe, on the question of his marriage with Catharine; and several of the foreign universities, more impressed with the criminality of the connection, than with the dispensing power of the pope, gave their verdict, without hesitation, against its legality. Oxford and Cambridge, though withheld for a time by their apprehensions of the consequences to the Catholic religion, were at length brought to concur in the same decision.

Fortified by these authorities, and by the gene-

* Roper, p. 26.

ral consent of his people, who now began very strongly to favour the Reformation, Henry proceeded to discover symptoms of an intention to shake off the control of the papal court. He refused to appear either in person or by proxy before the papal tribunal, whither his cause had been evoked, and would not even admit of a citation, which he now affected to consider as a heinous insult, and a violation of his prerogative. In the Parliament and convocation which met in the year 1531, measures were taken to abridge the authority of the pope in England. A confession was extorted from the convocation, that the king was the protector and supreme head of the church of England, although the partizans of the pope dexterously procured the insertion of a clause, declaring, that this was "only in so far as is permitted by the law of Christ." The Parliament, particularly the Commons, proceeding, on their part, with great alacrity to abridge the revenues of the Holy See, invested the king with a discretionary power either to prohibit or permit the pope to levy the *annates*, or first fruits, a tax which consisted in a year's rent of all the bishoprics that fell vacant, and which yielded considerable sums to the exchequer of Rome. It was also voted, that no regard should be paid to any censures which, in consequence of this act, might be issued by the court of Rome. The Commons next preferred to

the king, in his quality of Supreme Head of the Church, a long catalogue of complaints against the oppressions and abuses of the ecclesiastic courts ; and it was only by some accidental circumstances that they were prevented from applying very expeditious remedies to those evils.

More was at no loss to foresee the consequences of these decided proceedings. The authority of the pope, to the complete establishment of which he had looked as the only means of restoring the Christian world to tranquillity, was about to be shaken off; the king's divorce, for which this change was intended to pave the way, could not be long deferred ; and he personally must be ere long called on, in his official capacity, to take a part in these measures. He had already been under the necessity of bringing forward the business of the divorce in Parliament, and of explaining the king's motives and intentions ; * he had, on this occasion, strictly refrained from giving any indication of his own opinion, but he could not reconcile this ambiguous conduct to his sense of duty. Though his conviction remained unaltered, he had resolved to make no opposition to the measures which the king and the nation might be inclined to pursue, with regard to either the divorce or the supremacy. Yet while he was only anxious

* Roper, p. 29. Herbert, p. 235 and 256.

to bury his opinions in his own breast, he knew, that, in his official station, even silence would be construed into disapprobation. As the only means, therefore, by which he could at once preserve his integrity, and present no obstruction to the intended measures, he earnestly tendered his resignation to the king. To this request Henry could at first by no means be prevailed on to listen. He had, indeed, been much mortified that he could not bring More to the decision which he desired, and had often importuned him to reconsider the legality of his marriage. But though he found the chancellor immoveably fixed in his original opinion, such was the attachment with which the amiable qualities of his minister had inspired him, and such the respect which he entertained for his talents and integrity, that he bore this inflexibility without any apparent displeasure. Every new overture of this sort ended in new declarations on the part of Henry, that he would continue to accept his services on his own terms, that nothing should diminish his favour for him, and that he would no more molest his conscience by importunities. *

* Stapleton, p. 293. Macp. 116. So complete was Henry's persuasion that More would go every length in his favour which integrity would permit, that he once proposed him to the court of Rome as one of four arbitrators to whom the whole cause should be submitted. Of the other three the Archbishop of Canterbury was to be one, and the remaining two persons named by the emperor and the French king. Herbert, p. 269.

Resignation
of the chan-
cellorship,
1532.

It was, therefore, not till after repeated solicitations, and the intercession of the Duke of Norfolk, who was then in high favour at court, that More procured the acceptance of his resignation. He quitted power with the warmest applauses of his sovereign ; * Henry expatiated on the meritorious manner in which he had discharged his important trust, declared himself and his kingdom debtors for many and great services, and assured him, that he should ever find a ready compliance with any requests which his private interests might induce him to make. These expressions were unusually gracious from Henry to a minister who had refused compliance with his will ; yet when we consider that he was aware of the sacrifice which More had made in quitting a lucrative profession to gratify his sovereign's wishes, and of that disinterestedness which had ever prevented him from making a request for his private benefit, we cannot much admire the generosity of the prince who could allow such a minister to depart into retirement, without a provision for his future support.

Poverty.

We have seen the picture of domestic happiness which More's family exhibited previous to his accepting office, and the reluctance with which he

* Roper, p. 29. More, p. 186.

sacrificed these enjoyments to the pleasure of his sovereign. We might hence be led to conclude that, in resigning his high station, he only freed himself from unwelcome cares ; and that, in the bosom of his family, he would again find those comforts and endearments, for which public distinctions formed, in his eyes, a very inadequate compensation. Such was, indeed, the case, if we might judge from the pleasantry with which he announced his resignation to his family, and that flow of gaiety and humour which it rather increased than diminished. But the situation of his domestic affairs was greatly altered. Previous to his engaging in the king's service, the returns of a lucrative profession enabled him to live in considerable splendour ; to retain around him, and in his house, his daughters, their husbands, and their children ; and to attract, by his hospitality, a number of learned and ingenious friends. The offices which he afterwards held enabled him to continue this style of living ; but as he made no undue profits by them, nor employed his influence with the king to procure any additional grants, his bare salary was unequal to the expences entailed on him by his situation ; and his private fortune, which his liberality had never allowed greatly to accumulate, instead of being augmented by his public employments, was considerably impaired. On looking into his private affairs after his resignation, he found them

in a very reduced condition. His yearly income, derived from some property in land, did not exceed a hundred pounds ; * while the payment of his debts almost entirely exhausted his money and valuable effects. † As he could not, after having held the highest legal station in the kingdom, retrace his steps to wealth by resorting again to his profession, he was under the necessity of making such retrenchments as would adapt his expences to his fortune. He dismissed his whole train of retainers and state servants ; but with that affectionate concern which overlooked no one around him, he procured, for them all, suitable appointments in families of distinction. He gave his great barge to Sir Thomas Audley, his successor in the chancellorship, with whom he placed his eight watermen ; and his fool or jester, the distinguishing appendage of high rank in those days, he presented to the Lord Mayor of London, and his successors in office. ‡

But while the loss of such idle symbols of greatness could not occasion even a transient sensation

* Herbert, p. 270.

† His son-in-law, Mr Roper, informs us that, after the payment of his debts, the whole of More's property in gold and silver (paper obligations were not then known) did not, with the exception of his gold chain, the appendage of his rank, exceed the value of one hundred pounds.

‡ Roper, p. 30. More, p. 187.

of regret to one who had ever looked on them with indifference, the reduced state of his fortune compelled him to a sacrifice which could not but wound his heart. Unable any longer to provide for his daughters and their families, he was under the painful necessity of dismissing them to their homes, and of separating himself, for the first time, from that society, in which the chief happiness of his life had consisted. Nor did his family bear the loss of wealth and splendour with that equanimity which might have soothed his pain : his wife, as little distinguished for her humility as her patience, loudly reproached him with the unaccountable whim of wilfully quitting a station of such honour and profit, for poverty and insignificance ; and even his daughters, well-informed and well-regulated as were their minds, could not relinquish their splendour without a sigh. More, apparently nowise discomposed, found only new occasions of pleasantry in the altered demeanour of his family ; and, with a raillery much more effectual than argument, proved, that the grandeur and power which he had resigned were, in his eyes, the very trifles which he had always represented them. Observing the sadness of their looks, while devising such new economical arrangements as their altered circumstances required, he began, in a tone of humour, to assure them that they could still make a shift to live. " I have tried," said he, " various ways of living, and can

therefore direct you in this affair. We will begin with the slender diet of the students at law, and if that will not hold out, we may have recourse to the sober commons of Oxford : and if our purse should yet fail, we may still, as a last refuge, go a begging, and at every man's door sing a *Salve Regina* for alms." *

Thus did More endeavour to dispel the gloom of his family, and to communicate to them that cheerfulness and gaiety, of which no external circumstances could rob his own mind. His regret for altered circumstances were excited chiefly for persons beyond the range of his own household. In his better fortune, his liberality to men of genius, and his inexhaustible charity to the unfortunate, had been conspicuous among his virtues. Of those who applied to him for assistance, he relieved some with money, and others by his influence ; but to dismiss a person in distress without some alleviation, was a wound which his feelings could not endure. " You might call him," says Erasmus, " the benefactor of all the needy." † In the neighbourhood of his residence at Chelsea, he erected a house for the reception of aged people, who were maintained at his expence ; and it was

* Roper, p. 30. Herbert, p. 270. More alluded to the practice of the Mendicant Friars.

† Erasmi. Epist. 447.

the province of his favourite daughter, Margaret, to superintend this establishment, and see all the wants of its feeble inmates duly relieved. *

The feelings of More were, about this time, ^{Filial piety.} deeply affected by the death of his father. † Sir John More had lived to a very advanced age; and, in the exalted reputation and honours of his son, endeared to him as they were by unremitting demonstrations of filial duty, enjoyed the highest gratification which can attend the declining years of a parent. The manner in which More testified his veneration for his father, affords at once a proof of his affection, and an amusing picture of the simplicity of the age. While Chancellor, he never passed through Westminster Hall to his seat in Chancery, without going into the Court of King's Bench, when his father sat there, and receiving his blessing on his knees. When they happened to meet at the public readings in Lincoln's Inn, More always offered the precedence to his father, who as constantly refused the honour on account of his son's higher office. ‡ The venerable judge, after having seen his son elevated to the highest station that a subject could enjoy, lived not to witness the reverse of his fortunes.

* More, 149. Hoddesdon, 63.

† See More's inscription on his own tomb.

‡ Stapleton, p. 156. More, 10 and 163.

More now gave himself wholly up to those avocations which had ever yielded him most satisfaction ; and, in his retirement at Chelsea, passed his time in domestic conversation, in literature, and devotion. Aware that Henry, whose mind continually recurred with increasing violence to whatever had once become the object of its desire, would not fail again to importune him, and put his resolution to still severer tests ; he diligently employed his present leisure in preparing himself for the worst. It was during this interval that, with an eye steadily and calmly fixed on the prospects before him, he erected a monument for himself in the church of Chelsea, with an inscription recounting the most prominent incidents of his life. *

Invitation
to Court.
1533.

A few months after his retirement, he was again invited to court, to attend the public celebration of the king's marriage with Anne Boleyn. Henry, unable any longer to submit to the endless delays of the papal court, had already privately married this lady ; and now proceeded, in open defiance of the pope's authority, to have her crowned in public. The bishops, knowing how much Henry would be gratified by the presence and seeming approbation of More, united their requests for his

* This monument, which still remains entire and undefaced, is situated on the south side of the chancel. The inscription, as it is of considerable length, will be found in Appendix III.

attendance at the ceremony; and, aware of the contracted state of his circumstances, sent him a present of twenty pounds to purchase a gown for the occasion. Amused with this gift, prudently adapted as it was to a poverty which he might have avoided by accepting the former magnificent tenders of the clergy, he returned for answer, "That he could not mortify their lordships by a second refusal of their presents; that he would accept the gown, as twenty pounds was no great matter to them, though very important to a poor man like him; but he trusted that they would allow him to wear it only when he found inclined."* His conviction of the legality of Henry's first marriage remained unaltered; and as he had resigned his station rather than obstruct the views of the monarch, he was resolute to give no sanction to measures which he could not approve. His declining to attend the coronation seems to have greatly irritated the king. Henry now perceived that no management could induce him to swerve, even in appearance, from his deliberate opinions; and the more he esteemed his virtue and authority, the more indignant he was that he could not induce him to countenance his measures. The angry feelings of the monarch were also perpetually exasperated by Anne Boleyn, † who looked on More

* Roper, p. 33.

† More, p. 203. Hoddesdon, p. 94.

as her capital enemy, and who tarnished many shining qualities by an implacable spirit of revenge.

Indictment
with the
Maid of
Kent.
1534.

An occasion was soon afterwards eagerly embraced to involve More in an indictment for misprision of treason. Elizabeth Barton, a fanatic nun, having, amidst certain fits with which she was troubled, uttered some wild ravings, which she and her credulous neighbours construed into inspirations of the Holy Ghost ; two designing priests, perceiving the private advantage which they might draw from the circumstance, induced her to join with them in a scandalous imposture. By their direction she declaimed vehemently against heresy, and all innovations in religion ; and, as her miracles and revelations, all tending to the same purpose, now attracted general attention, her cause began to be considered by many popish zealots as intimately connected with their own. Her pretended humility and devotion, with the intrigues of her accomplices, procured her some notice from Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and still more Fisher, Bishop of Rochester. More himself was induced by these circumstances to investigate her story ; and although he at once perceived the folly of her pretensions, he at first attributed her extravagances rather to delirium than artifice ; for, in his letters to his daughter, Mrs Roper, he called her

always the silly * nun. Detecting afterwards her imposture, he declared her to be the most false, dissembling hypocrite he had ever known. † In the mean time, her accomplices, emboldened by a success which exceeded their most sanguine calculations, began to conceive the daring project of overawing the monarch. She was now instructed to declaim against the king's divorce, to send comforting revelations to the queen ; and, at length, to declare, that, if Henry divorced Catharine and married another, he should not be king a month longer. Such treasonable speeches, rendered dangerous by the increasing reputation of the Maid of Kent, as she was called, could no longer be overlooked by the government. She and her accomplices having been brought to trial, and having confessed not only their impostures, but a secret train of abandoned profligacy, were deservedly executed. The Bishop of Rochester and some others were indicted for misprision of treason, in not disclosing some speeches of a treasonable nature, which, it was asserted, they had heard her utter ; and the name of More, although nothing of this kind could be alleged against him, was included in the bill of attainder.

Of the injustice of this charge against More,

* Roper, p. 34.

† See his letter to Cromwell in Burnet's Collections, Vol. I.

every one was convinced ; but though the most eminent of the king's ministers endeavoured to have his name struck out of the bill, Henry's consent could be obtained only on the condition that More should be brought to acknowledge the propriety of his divorce, and the legality of his second marriage. To extort this submission from him, a committee of privy counsellors, who had been appointed to hear his defence, were instructed to win him over by reminding him of the many honours and peculiar marks of attachment which the king had bestowed upon him, and by assuring him that his majesty was inclined to be as gracious as ever. If these gentle means should be found ineffectual, they were then commanded to charge him, not only with ingratitude, but with base treachery to his prince, in having induced him, by his subtle devices, to publish a book in defence of the pope's authority, which, to his great dishonour, was now turned against himself ; and this accusation they were directed to conclude with threats of the severest vengeance. More, having refused to retract his opinions, and having heard them to an end, calmly replied, that their threats were arguments for children : that, undeserving as he was of the king's favours, he should consider himself as more unworthy of them if he could violate his integrity : that, as to the publication of the work in defence of the pope's supremacy, his majesty himself must,

on recollection, acquit him of that charge ; since, instead of advising such a measure, he had, on being employed to revise it, strongly remonstrated against the high tone in which the pope's authority was there maintained : that he had earnestly entreated the king to have the expressions of this tendency softened, representing the bad purposes to which they might be applied, in the event of any future misunderstanding with the pope ; but that his majesty had declared his resolution to set forth the pope's authority to the uttermost, whatever might be the consequences.

The result of this conference served only to exasperate Henry's resentment ; since More had not only persisted to thwart his inclinations, but had even dared to charge him with misrepresentation. Obstinately bent, therefore, on his condemnation, he resolved to prevent the effects of his well known eloquence, by refusing him permission to be heard in his own defence ; and when he understood that the Lords were not likely to pass the bill of attainder, if this despotic and barbarous, yet not uncommon stretch of power, were put in force, he declared his resolution to be present at the discussion, imagining that the awe of his authority would prevail over the eloquence of his victim. The Duke of Norfolk and Secretary Cromwell, his two principal ministers, who, though friends to the Reformation, entertained a high esteem for More, and anxiously

Relinquished.

desired to save him, at length fell on their knees before the king ; and, while they represented to him the danger of allowing so eloquent a man to plead in his own defence, and the disgrace which his majesty would incur if the vote should be given against him in his own presence, they dexterously suggested the probability of finding a much more plausible ground of accusation against the object of his displeasure than this. To this last consideration the obstinacy of Henry at length yielded, and he consented that More's name should be struck out of the * bill.

Resignation
and fortitude.

But, in that age, an escape from royal vengeance could never be looked on as leading to permanent security. From this time forward, More well knew that ruin was suspended over him, and that a pretext would not long be wanting to bring him to the scaffold : yet, far from attempting to avert his fate by any degrading compliance, he awaited its approach with the firmness of a hero, and the tranquillity of a philosopher. To fortify the minds of his family against the expected event, and to lessen those apprehensions by which they were perpetually distracted, he often spoke of death as the termination of those struggles which heaven had appointed for our nature ; and the cheerfulness which always appeared in his countenance, when

* Roper, p. 40.

he discoursed of passing from the one state of being to the other, showed that the prospect inspired him with hopes unalloyed by apprehension. * A short time after the transaction which has been related, the Duke of Norfolk, taking an opportunity to represent to him how dangerous it was to contend with princes, entreated him, as a friend, to yield to the king's requests; and emphatically reminded him of the adage, that the wrath of a prince is death. "Is that all, my Lord?" replied More; "then there is only this difference between your Grace and me, that I shall die to-day, and you to-morrow. It is surely better to offend an earthly king than the King of Heaven; and temporal death ought to be far less the object of our dread than the indignation of the Almighty." †

As it was now publicly known that Henry anxiously waited for some pretext to ruin More, those Accused of corruption. miscreants who are ever ready to minister to a prince's worst passions, began to search diligently for accusations against him; and, strange as it may seem, the first crime laid to his charge was corruption in his judicial capacity. One Parnel accused him of having made a decree against him in the court of Chancery, at the instance of Vaughan his adversary; for which More had received, at the hands of Vaughan's wife, (Vaughan himself

* Roper, p. 32. Hodgesdon, p. 78.

† Roper, p. 40.

having been confined at home through illness,) a great gilt cup as a bribe. More, having been brought before the council to answer this accusation, readily owned that, as the cup had been brought him for a new year's gift, long after the decree was made, he had not refused to receive it. No sooner was this confession uttered than the minions of the king, and the partisans of Anne Boleyn, thinking that he was at length caught in a snare, began loudly to express their exultation. More, after allowing them to proceed for some time, gravely requested, that, as they had kindly listened to one part of the tale, they would now vouchsafe to hear the other. He then informed them, that having, after much solicitation, received the cup, he had ordered his butler to fill it immediately with wine, of which he drank to Mrs Vaughan; and when she had pledged him in it, he, in his turn, insisted on her again presenting it in his name, as a new year's gift, to her husband; and Mrs Vaughan, with much reluctance, actually found herself obliged to carry it back. The truth of this statement was immediately sworn to by the woman herself, and other persons who happened to be present at the time. *

In this manner terminated various accusations of the same description, which were now brought

* Roper, p. 35.

against him. Far from accepting of any previous gift, which might have biassed his judgment in the decision, the result invariably proved, that he had refused the most trifling token of gratitude from those whom his equity had righted. It was proved that he had received another cup, and, pleased with the pattern, had retained it; but it appeared at the same time, that, as the only condition of accepting it, he had obliged the giver to receive in return a cup of much greater value.* On another occasion two silver flagons were sent him by a suitor in Chancery: when they were presented by the gentleman's servant, More desired one of his men to take him to the cellar, and let him have his flagons filled with the best wine; then, turning to the messenger, "Tell thy master," said he, "if he like it, let him not spare it."† A lady, in whose favour he had made a decree in Chancery against a nobleman of rank, having, as a token of her gratitude, presented him with a pair of gloves, and in them forty pounds in angels,‡ as a new

* Roper, p. 36.

† Bacon's Works, fol. edit. 1740, Vol. III. p. 275.

‡ An angel was an old English coin of the value of ten shillings. Its denomination was adopted to commemorate a pun of Pope Gregory the Great, which seems to have highly flattered the vanity of the nation. Struck with the fair complexions and blooming countenances of some Anglo-Saxon captives who had been brought to Rome, he had observed, that, instead of *Angles*, they ought to be termed *Angels*.

year's gift, More took the gloves, but, pouring out the money, and returning it, said with a smile, "Since it would be contrary to good manners to refuse a new year's gift from a lady, I am content to take your gloves, but, as for the lining, I utterly refuse it." *

1534.
Of misprision of treason.

An act, passed in the next session of Parliament, gave Henry a more promising opportunity for prosecuting his revenge against More. It declared the king's marriage with Catharine to be unlawful and void, ratified his marriage with Anne, and fixed the inheritance of the crown, first in her issue, and afterwards in the king's legal heirs. The same act commanded an oath to be taken in support of its provisions, under the penalty of misprision of treason; while all who should speak or write against the king's marriage with Anne were declared to be traitors. † This oath, extended by the ministers greatly beyond the meaning of the act, was administered chiefly to those who, from their rank and influence, could promote or obstruct the settlement of the crown; and Henry lost no time in requiring the obedience of More, expecting that the penalties annexed to the refusal of the oath would effectually enforce those arguments which had so often been urged in vain. At a committee of the cabinet council, which was ordered to sit at

* Roper, p. 36.

† Herbert, p. 294.

Lambeth, several ecclesiastics of distinction, and More, but no other layman, were summoned to appear and take the oath.

The period which he had long foreseen was now arrived, since there was no alternative left but either to renounce his integrity, or incur the penalties of the statute. On the part which he was to act he indeed required no deliberation ; but a final separation from his beloved family (for the character of Henry left him no certainty that he should see them again) was a prospect which he could not behold *unmoved. Obligated, however, to wear smiles on his countenance, that he might not increase those apprehensions with which they were already agitated, he endeavoured to take leave of them with the same affectionate composure as when the regret of a temporary parting was compensated by the assurance of a speedy return. Having privately settled his affairs, he retired, on the morning of his departure for Lambeth, into his chapel, where, after taking the sacrament, and performing some other religious ceremonies, he spent some time alone in finally closing the account between his mind and the world. When the hour of departure arrived, he came forth with a countenance full of composure and cheerfulness. " I thank our Lord the field is won," said he, with an

* Stapleton, p. 303.

air of triumph, to his son-in-law, Mr Roper, as he seated himself in the barge which was to convey him to * Lambeth. From this period he spoke and acted as a man who had renounced the cares of the world, and was scarcely capable of being moved, unless by the pleasures which he anticipated. To one who looked forward with the fullest assurance to a happy immortality, and who felt that nothing could compensate a deviation from integrity, an escape from a tyranny which endeavoured to make him renounce his most private and sacred opinions, was a cause of unfeigned exultation. If the ties of kindred still drew from him, by a sudden impulse, some sympathetic expressions, his usual demeanour was not less composed or cheerful than if the prospect of the longest and happiest life had been opened before him. Gay without an effort, and sportive wherever an occasion offered, he seemed resolved that no friend should weep, and no enemy triumph over his fate.

Sent to the
Tower.

When called before the council at Lambeth, he declared that he had no objection to swear to the prescribed order of succession, since he considered the Parliament as fully entitled to regulate that matter in any way which it thought proper ; and to this effect he offered to take an oath drawn up by himself. But the terms of the oath, as they at

* Roper, p. 41.

present stood, he declared to be irreconcilable to his conscience, since they asserted the illegality of the king's first marriage, and the legality of his second. Many arguments and solicitations were employed by his friends to overcome his scruples ; but, though much affected by the earnest entreaties of Cranmer, the primate, and Cromwell, secretary of state, who highly esteemed and loved him, he adhered to his resolution in spite of his feelings, and in a gentle but firm manner, persisted in his refusal. He was in consequence committed for some days to the custody of the Abbot of Westminster, and in the mean time the course to be taken with him was debated in council. Archbishop Cranmer earnestly contended, that his proposal of swearing distinctly to maintain the order of succession should be accepted, without confining him to the prescribed terms of the oath. But Henry, whose resentment was now rendered wholly ungovernable by resistance, resolved that More should either yield or perish, and insisted that the penalties of the statute should be enforced, and that he should be immediately committed to the Tower. His friend Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who had refused to take the oath upon the same grounds, was sentenced to the same.* confinement.

* More, p. 220.

Cheerful-
ness.

It was now that More had an opportunity of proving to his enemies how little power they had over him, and with what ease he could sport, not only with the threats, but with the actual execution of their vengeance. He entered the Tower as if returning to his home, and conversed with the same tone of pleasantry which he was accustomed to maintain in his domestic circle. When the porter at the Tower gate, according to custom, demanded his upper garment; "Marry, friend, here it is," said he, giving him his cap; "I am sorry it is not better, for thy sake." "Nay, sir," replied the porter, "I must have your gown;" and this also he immediately gave him with the same good humour.* In ridicule of the insidious practice of placing spies to watch and report the words and actions of state prisoners, he called his servant, John Awood, who could neither read nor write, and swore him before the lieutenant of the Tower, that if he should at any time hear him speak, or see him write, any thing against the king, the council, and the government of the realm, he should immediately give information of it. The lieutenant, who had formerly received favours from him, began to apologise for the wretched accommodation, with which the dread of the king's displeasure obliged him to receive his benefactor. "Mr Lieu-

* Roper, p. 42.

tenant," said More, interrupting him, "whenever I find fault with the entertainment you provide for me, do you turn me out of doors." *

The nature of his confinement was in correspondence with the rigour of Henry's character. Interview with his daughter : None of his friends or his family were at first allowed to visit him ; and it was an unexpected act of royal clemency, when his favourite daughter, Margaret, the wife of Mr Roper, by her unwearied and earnest supplications, at length obtained that permission. Susceptible by nature, and cultivated with unremitting care, the mind of this lady had improved to his fondest expectations. While celebrated for superiority in music, and the other elegant accomplishments of her age, she was still more distinguished for her eminent proficiency in the learned languages. Cardinal Pole, a judge, as well as a conspicuous patron of letters, was so struck with the beauty of her Latin style, as to be induced with difficulty to believe that what he had read of her compositions was written by a woman. She wrote two declamations in English, of which she and her father each turned one into Latin, with such equal felicity, that it was doubtful which deserved the preference ; and her treatise on the " Four Last Things" was at once so elegant and forcible, that her father readily acknowledged its

* Roper, p. 42.

superiority to one of his own on the same subject.* Her emendations on the texts of the ancient authors were often very successful; and one of them, on a Greek writer, is mentioned by an able judge, as, in his opinion, equal to those of the most celebrated critics, of Scaliger, Turnebus, or Salmasius.†

With these accomplishments, Margaret was eminently possessed of the qualities which produce domestic happiness. Her deportment was modest and humble; her disposition gentle and affectionate. Equally distinguished as a wife and a mother, she was rewarded with the tender esteem of her husband, and the fond attachment of her children. With her father's disposition her own perfectly coalesced; she entered into all his sentiments, and was entrusted with the inmost feelings of his heart. From her praises, which he heard from the wise, the virtuous, and the accomplished, he derived peculiar gratification; ‡ and still more from the fond esteem with which she attributed to him whatever rendered her in any degree estimable. Before her entreaties could procure admission to him in prison she thus wrote to him: "What do you think, my most dear father, doth comfort us at Chelsea in your absence? Surely the remembrance of your

* Stapleton, p. 252 and 264. More, p. 139.

† Le Clerc. *Bibliothèque Choisie*.

‡ More, p. 141. Stapleton, p. 264.

manner of life passed amongst us, your holy conversation, your wholesome counsels, your examples of virtue." *

The circumstances of the present interview, which might probably be their last, rendered it peculiarly affecting. After they had spent some time together in devotion, a practice which they did not neglect in their better fortune, More endeavoured, by some indifferent and cheerful conversation, to calm that agitation which his daughter strove in vain to repress. He spoke of the court, and, learning that the young queen, intoxicated with her new honours, was occupied with one continued round of splendour, he lamented that she was blind to the precarious foundation on which her pleasures rested, and that she might so soon be overtaken by misfortunes which her mind was ill prepared to encounter. During this conversation, the eye of his daughter having been caught by a procession, attending to the place of execution two priests, condemned for the same crime of which her father was accused, she was unable to conceal the painful ideas which rushed upon her mind. More assumed a look of regret: "These holy men," said he, "are already accepted in the sight of heaven, and their virtue is now to be rewarded

* Mrs Roper's letter to her father in the Tower, in Stapleton, p. 236.

by admission into the happiness for which they have prayed ; while your father, sinful and undeserving as he is, must still linger here in anxious expectation, till the measure of his trial is completed." When she was at length about to depart, he privately committed to her charge his hair shirt and knotted whip, the constant attendants of his more prosperous days. To her alone, from whom he concealed no weakness or virtue, the secret of his possessing them was known ; and dreading that he might no longer be able to hide from his enemies an expression of zeal which might be construed into ostentation, he took this opportunity of delivering them to his daughter. *

With his
wife.

An interview with his wife, for which permission was some time after obtained, if not so affecting to his feelings, equally proved his superiority to his fate. Mrs More, as we have already observed, was an excellent economist and manager of a family, qualities for which she had been selected by her husband : but, although she had so long enjoyed the benefit of his conversation, and had even, in compliance with his wishes, applied herself, at a very unsuitable age, to the acquisition of elegant accomplishments ; yet her habits of mind had been too completely formed to be susceptible of much change. She could not by any means enter into

* Roper, p. 28 and 43.

her husband's sentiments with regard to the vanity of riches, the folly of worldly splendour, or an inviolable adherence to principle : nor could she conceive that the approbation of one's own mind might not be sufficiently reconciled with those small deviations from absolute integrity, which the common practice of very reputable persons sanctioned. When her husband quitted the chancery, she had reproached him with the unaccountable whim which led him to reduce his family to beggary and disgrace. She now visited him in the Tower, to remonstrate with him on what seemed a still more incomprehensible act of folly. " She could not understand," she said, " how he, who had always been reputed so wise a man, should now so play the fool, as to be contentedly shut up in a close, filthy prison, with rats and mice, when he might enjoy his liberty, and the king's favour, if he would but do as all the bishops and other learned men had done. And as he had a good house to live in, his library, his gallery, his garden, and all other conveniences handsome about him, she could not conceive what he meant by wilfully tarrying in this imprisonment." More, having heard her patiently to an end, asked her with a smile, " whether that house was not as nigh to heaven as his own ?" As the good lady discovered much indignation at this indifferent treatment of her prudential reasonings, he altered his tone, and very

seriously assured her, "that he saw no great cause for joy in the things which she had mentioned, in a house which would so soon forget its master; that, if he were under ground but seven years, and then returned to visit it, he should find it possessed by those who would bid him begone, and tell him it was none of his. And how uncertain," continued he, "would be my tenure of these enjoyments! Surely that man would be imprudent indeed, who should endanger the loss of a happy eternity for a thousand years of pleasure; yet how much more foolish to risk eternity for what is not secure during one day." *

Indicted,

The progress of the national change in religion soon prepared fresh trials for his fortitude. Henry, delighted with his new ecclesiastical powers, and enraged at the measures which the Court of Rome had adopted against him, had come to an open breach with the pope, and resolved to carry matters to the utmost extremity. While, by one act of parliament, he procured himself to be declared, without reservation, Supreme Head of the Church, his authority was enforced in another by a provision, which rendered it high treason to deny, by word or writing, this or any other of his titles.† This act, as it emancipated the nation from the yoke of

* Roper, p. 46.

† 26 Henry VIII. c. 1 and 13.

Rome, and destroyed the veneration in which her superstitions had so long been held, was every way politic and meritorious : but it was only the passions of Henry that ministered to the public good, for his intentions were as depraved as his conduct was atrocious. To revenge his quarrel, and extend his power, he wrested the supremacy from the pope ; to procure supplies for his prodigality, he pillaged the monasteries : but while he gratified his passions by these encroachments on the church, he adhered with the most obstinate bigotry to such of her superstitious tenets as did not immediately thwart his inclinations. Encouraged by the tame submission with which his most tyrannical mandates were received by his subjects, he at length resolved that his own creed should be their only rule of faith, and that the sole crime in religion should be a dissent from his opinions. Provided by the act against denying his supremacy on the one hand, and by the existing laws against heretics on the other, with the means of exterminating all who should refuse a conformity to his will, he proceeded with the most impartial cruelty to massacre those Papists who would not abjure the pope, and those Protestants who would not acknowledge transubstantiation. By a refinement in barbarity, the heretics and the adherents of the pope were dragged on the same hurdle to the fires in Smithfield.

Afraid, perhaps, that such enormities would

rouse the public detestation, Henry at first affected to be deeply grieved at the measures which he represented as forced on him by the laws ; and, as outward tokens of his sorrow, caused the hair of his head to be cut short, and his beard to be cut instead of shaven.* But he had soon waded too deep in blood, and become too familiar with murder, longer to regard the opinions of mankind. On looking back to these scenes, we are astonished that such a monster should have been permitted to reign or to live ; but the state of men's minds at that period sufficiently accounts for their unre-sisting submission. The nation was divided into two great parties, the favourers of the old and of the new doctrines, and Henry seemed to waver between the two. Each of them, aware of the headlong violence of his passions, was afraid, by any show of opposition, to throw him into the arms of its adversary ; and hoped, by an excess of submission, to win him over to itself. To such a degree also were the feelings of humanity blunted by religious bigotry, that each party seemed more gratified with the sufferings of its antagonists, than incensed by the injuries of its own members ; and the most barbarous act of which Henry could be guilty, was sure to be loudly applauded by one part of the nation. His cruelties are therefore to be

* Herbert, p. 310.

charged on his subjects, almost as much as on himself. Any man of strong passions, if entrusted with uncontrolled power, and abetted in his most wanton excesses, would, like him, disgrace human nature by his enormities.

Finding the fires of Smithfield too slow to consume the heretics and Catholics who refused compliance with his will, Henry determined to strike a general terror by making some illustrious examples. *. For this purpose, More and Fisher, who still lay in the Tower, were selected; and to the latter the first application was made for submission to the new order of things. But Fisher, who, according to the prescribed forms of installation, had already sworn to the pope's supremacy, could not be prevailed on to commit what he accounted an act of perjury, in acknowledging the supremacy of the king. His fate was precipitated by an ill-judged interference of the pope, who endeavoured to deter Henry from a farther prosecution by threats, and even sent a cardinal's hat to Fisher, as a martyr to the Catholic cause. The venerable prelate, in whom nature was almost exhausted by the pressure of years, and by the severities he had suffered, underwent the formality of a trial, was condemned, and executed.

The fate of Fisher is said to have been intended

* Herbert, p. 310.

by Henry as a warning to More, whose great authority at home and abroad, increased as it had lately been by his intrepid integrity, rendered the king more and more desirous to gain him over. *

A committee of the privy council were, therefore, appointed to visit him in the Tower, and prevail on him to acknowledge the king's supremacy; or if, after every effort, they failed, they were instructed to draw from him such an explicit denial of it, as might afford a sufficient foundation for a charge of high treason. But argument or artifice were alike unable to extort either of these declarations from More. His opinions, with regard to the pope's supremacy, were indeed abundantly liberal, and seem to have been guided, not by veneration for the office, but by considerations of public utility. At one period of his life, he considered the successor of St Peter as merely entitled to a sort of primacy, which might be of much advantage in regulating the affairs of religion. † But on looking more narrowly into the question, while employed in revising Henry's defence of the pope's authority, he perceived that the simple primacy, which he had formerly been inclined to allow him, would, without more extensive powers, be almost nugatory. ‡ The impressions which he

* Herbert, p. 311.

† More's Letter to Secretary Cromwell.

‡ Ibid.

then received, having been gradually strengthened by the convulsions of the Reformation, and by the violent controversies in which he engaged, he appears at length to have been convinced that a high degree of authority on the part of the pope, in the decision of religious matters, was the only method of restoring the Christian world to prosperity and harmony. Still his ideas of the supremacy were not without limits; for the decisions of general councils, proceeding from the collected wisdom of so many able men, he accounted superior to the decrees of the papal court; * and, far from desiring that the pope should anywise interfere with the temporal jurisdiction of the kingdom, he had cheerfully given his support to the statute of *Premunire*, which destroyed all undue influence over the English ecclesiastics. †

If these considerations rendered him averse to abjure the authority of the pope, the concomitant requisition, the acknowledgment of Henry's supremacy, was attended with insuperable objections. To place his conscience at the mercy of such an umpire, to receive, renounce, or alter the articles of his faith, according as the passions or the whim of a capricious tyrant dictated, were conditions to

* More's Letter to Secretary Cromwell.

† Burnet's History of the Reformation, Vol. I. p. 120. edit. 1715.

which the mind of More could never submit ; yet all these were implied in the required acknowledgment. Resolved, therefore, to stop short of such concessions, yet desirous to afford his enemies no just pretext for their persecution, he determined to express no opinion whatever on the subject. While concealed within his own breast, his sentiments, even if erroneous, could do no injury ; and the statute itself was not so unjust as to construe silence into a crime. All the efforts of the committee could, therefore, draw from him nothing more explicit than the ambiguous expression, "that the act was a two-edged sword ; if he answered one way, it would destroy his body ; if another, it would ruin his soul."

The fresh indignation which the result of this interview occasioned in Henry was soon perceptible in the increased rigour of More's imprisonment. On pretence that he might write something against the king's supremacy, or second marriage, he was deprived of pen, ink, and paper, and even of all his books. Cut off by this wanton act of barbarity from the only intercourse which had for some time been allowed him with his family and friends, he had still the fortitude to triumph over his regret, and devise expedients to remove its cause. When he could by any means procure a little paper, he contrived, with the assistance of a piece of coal, to write to his beloved daughter, to

his wife, and some chosen friends ; still endeavouring to inspire their minds with that tranquillity, which the miseries of his confinement, and the certain approach of death, were unable to wrest from his own. *

After having been imprisoned in the Tower upwards of a year, he was at length brought to trial ; ^{1535, for High Treason.} and here he proved that, if he was unmoved at the approach of death, his indifference was nowise allied to the carelessness of despair. Though obliged to support himself on a staff, from the weakness contracted during his rigorous confinement ; yet his countenance, firm, composed, and animated, showed how fully his mind was collected, and how well his faculties were prepared to support him in a vigorous defence.† The charges exhibited against him proved, by their weakness, and the harsh terms in which they were couched, the eagerness of the court to accomplish his ruin. The silence he had maintained, when questioned

* Roper, p. 55. A letter written in this manner to a particular friend is inserted in Jortin's Life of Erasmus, Vol. II. p. 702. This epistle is employed in expressing his sense of many obligations, and in testifying how sweet was the remembrance of this friendship, even when the world was now no longer any thing to him, who daily waited in expectation of a passage to the next. At the conclusion he thus subscribes himself: "Thomas Morus: frustra fecero si adjiciam tuus ; nam hoc jam nescire non potes, quum tot beneficiis emeris: nec ego nunc talis sum, ut referat cujus sim."

† Hoddesdon, p. 105.

about the act, was affirmed to be malicious ; the ambiguous expression which had been drawn from him, was attempted to be construed into a positive denial of the supremacy ; and some intercourse by letter, which had passed in the Tower between him and the Bishop of Rochester, was also inserted among his crimes. *

The evident weakness of these allegations he unexpectedly found strengthened by the appearance of a witness, who charged him with having, in his presence, directly denied the king's supremacy. This witness was one Rich, who had raised himself to the office of solicitor-general, and aspired to still higher legal honours, by becoming the obsequious tool of Henry's cruelties. Rendered, by his cunning, duplicity, and unhesitating perfidy, a fit instrument for inveigling state prisoners into unguarded expressions, which might afterwards be produced against them ; he had, in this capacity, already contributed to furnish a colour for the condemnation of the Bishop of Rochester. Having been sent with others to execute the order by which More was deprived of his books and writing materials, he seized this opportunity to draw the prisoner into a snare. With this view, while the others were employed in executing the commission, he addressed himself to More in a

* Herbert, p. 311.

style of great friendship, expressing a high admiration of his wisdom, learning, and knowledge of the law; and gradually turning the discourse to the subject of the supremacy, he begged leave to ask, as merely in the way of conversation, whether, if it were enacted by parliament, that he, Richard Rich, should be king, More would acknowledge him to be so? More replied, without hesitation, that he certainly should; since parliament was entitled either to make or depose a * king. Rich then inquired, whether, if the parliament should appoint him supreme head of the church, More would not show equal deference to its authority? More replied, that the cases were widely different; that parliament might interfere with perfect propriety to regulate the succession of our temporal princes; but as to the other question, he would, in his turn, beg to know, whether, if an act of parliament were passed, ordaining that God should not be God, Mr Rich would submit in this instance to its authority? Rich replied, that he certainly should not; since it would be absurd to attribute such power to parliament. †

Thus ended the conversation; but as the expressions which had passed were insufficient for the purposes of the solicitor, he resolved to frame the story to his own views. At the trial he came

* Herbert, p. 312.

† Roper, p. 48. Stapleton, p. 320.

forward and swore, that, on his acknowledging, in answer to a case put to him by More, that no parliament could make a law that God should not be God, More had rejoined, "No more can the parliament make the king supreme head of the church." Astonished at the perfidy and daring perjury of his accuser, More turned round indignantly to his judges: "If I were a man, my Lords," said he, "that did not regard an oath, I needed not at this time, and in this place, as is well known to you all, stand as an accused person: but, if this testimony, which you, Mr Rich, have given, be true, then I pray that I may never see the face of God; which I would not say, were it otherwise, to gain the whole world." This solemn asseveration from a man, whose most peculiar virtue was an inviolable adherence to truth, seemed so much to outweigh, in the minds of the jury, the dubious deposition of Rich, that the latter, confounded and mortified, endeavoured to confirm his evidence, by bringing forward the others who had been employed with him in the commission. But they, conscious of its falsehood, and yet afraid to declare the truth, deposed that they had at the moment been so much occupied with carrying away the books and papers, as to give no attention to the conversation. *

* Roper, p. 49, 51.

The evidence of the principal witness being thus shaken, More proceeded to expose the futility of the other charges, with a force and eloquence which seemed to remove every doubt from the minds of his audience. But the firmest conviction of his innocence could not be expected to outweigh, with his judges, the hopes of royal favour, and the imminent danger of their lives. Almost without deliberation, and as if the minds of the jury had been made up before the trial, he was declared guilty of high treason, and condemned to die as a traitor. * He heard the sentence pronounced without any sign of surprise or indignation, and briefly addressed himself to the court, which consisted of a select commission of peers and judges. "My Lords," said he, "I have nothing further to add, but that, as the blessed Apostle Paul was present, and consented to the death of Stephen, and yet both are now holy saints in heaven, where they shall continue in friendship for ever; so I earnestly trust and pray, that though your Lordships have now been judges on earth to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter all meet together in everlasting love and happiness." †

On his return from Westminster Hall to the Tower, his fortitude had to undergo a severer trial. Interview with his daughter.

* *Regin. Poli. Defens. Eccl. Anglic. lib. iii. Stapleton, p. 339.*

† *Roper, p. 54.*

His favourite daughter, Margaret, apprehending that this might be the last opportunity of seeing her beloved father, had stationed herself at the Tower wharf, where he would necessarily pass. But when he appeared in sight, with the axe, the emblem of condemnation, borne before him, her feelings could no longer be controlled. Regardless of the spectators, she burst through the crowd, and through the guards which surrounded him, and, clinging round his neck, hung upon him in an agony of despair. While the tears streamed from her eyes, the only words that could force an utterance were, " My father ! Oh my father !" More, while he pressed her to his heart, endeavoured to calm her agitation : he reminded her that she well knew all the secrets of his soul ; that the knowledge of his innocence ought to lessen her dismay at his approaching fate ; and that resignation was due to the will of God, without whose permission none of these events could take place. At length she made an effort to recover herself, and, faintly bidding him adieu, suffered the attendants to lead her away. But she had proceeded only a few paces, when the thought that she had seen her father for the last time, rushed with irresistible poignancy on her mind.—She again burst through the crowd ; again hung upon his neck, and gave way to all the bitterness of her anguish. Her father, though his mind had long been prepared to

meet his fate, and though its approach had been wholly unable to discompose his fortitude, could not look unmoved on her distress ; and a tear, which stole down his cheek, betrayed the emotion which he struggled to conceal. The spectators, deeply affected, beheld this tender scene in silence ; and even the guards could not refrain from tears, while they gently forced her from the arms of her father. *

With this affecting interview his sufferings seemed to be concluded. On his return to the Tower he found an opportunity of writing once more to his daughter ; and while he expressed the gratification which he derived from the last instance of her filial affection, he endeavoured to convince her of the happiness which he felt at his approaching deliverance from earthly sorrows. † Henceforth, indeed, his mind seemed fully restored to its habitual cheerfulness ; and his enemies learnt with surprise, that their promises or threats were equally the objects of his pleasantry. Henry, still unwilling to persuade himself that all his power gave him no control over the mind of More, delayed his execution for a few days, in hopes that the nearer prospect of death might shake his resolution. He even affected to show his favour for the prisoner, by ordering that he should be simply beheaded, in-

* Roper, p. 55.

† Ibid.

stead of being hanged and quartered, the usual punishment of traitors. More, when informed of this preposterous affectation of mercy, exclaimed, with a smile, " God forbid that any of my friends or posterity should have similar demands to make on the royal clemency !" *

1535.

His condemnation had taken place on the first of June, † and on the sixth of that month, Sir Thomas Pope, one of his particular friends, came very early in the morning, by the king's command, to acquaint him that his execution was to take place on that day at nine o'clock. More thanked his friend for the good news ; and when informed of his Majesty's pleasure that he should use few words on the scaffold, he readily acquiesced, adding, that he had otherwise intended to say something, which, however, could have given no offence. He expressed a desire that his daughter, Margaret, might be allowed to attend his funeral ; and showed much satisfaction when he learnt that the king had already granted this permission to his whole family. Observing that Pope, who greatly esteemed and loved him, was deeply affected with the painful commission which he had been obliged to execute, he endeavoured to convince him, by the gaiety of his conversation, how little his lot was to be lamented : and when his friend could not refrain

* Hoddesdon, p. 419.

† Stapleton, p. 314.

from weeping bitterly at parting, he reminded him, with a look of exultation, that ere long they should meet in eternal felicity.*

He now began to dress himself for his execution in the best apparel which he had by him; and when the lieutenant of the Tower, observing that this was too good for the executioner, who, according to custom, was entitled to whatever he wore at that time, begged of him to choose another dress; "If they were cloth of gold," said More, "I should think them well bestowed on him who was to do me so singular a benefit." Unwilling, however, to mortify the lieutenant by a refusal, he dressed himself in a gown of frieze, but, as a compensation, sent the executioner an angel of gold.†

As he passed along to the place of execution on Tower-hill, the sympathy of the spectators was expressed by silence and tears. One man alone, from among the crowd, was heard to reproach him with a decision which he had given against him in Chancery. More, nowise discomposed by this ill-timed expression of resentment, calmly replied, that if it were still to do, he would give the same decision.‡

His behaviour on the scaffold corresponded to ^{Execution.} the whole tenor of his conduct. Perfectly com-

* Roper, p. 57.

† Ibid. Stapleton, p. 333.

‡ Herbert, p. 312.

posed and collected, and dying in harmony with all mankind, his countenance was unaffectedly cheerful, and his words expressed a mind completely tranquil. He seemed to have resolved, or rather to have without an effort accomplished, that the faint-hearted should perceive nothing in the suffering, or even the solemnity of his end, which could deter them from encountering a similar fate. Perceiving that the scaffold was weakly erected, he said, in his usual tone, to the attending officer, "I pray thee, friend, see me safe up, and for my coming down, let me shift for myself." Observing the executioner pale and trembling, he said to him, "Pluck up thy spirits, man, and be not afraid to do thy office: my neck is very short; see, therefore, that thou do not mar thy credit by cutting awry." Having spent a short time in devotion, he took the napkin with which his eyes were to be bound, and calmly performed that office for himself; then, laying his head on the block, he bade the executioner stay till he removed his beard, "for it," said he, "has committed no treason." *

* Roper, p. 58. Herbert, p. 312. Stapleton, p. 353. To those who cannot enter into the character of More, and who cannot conceive that the prospect of death, under which their own hearts sink, should be viewed by any man with such complete indifference, his sportive humour on the scaffold may appear to detract from the dignity of his character. But, in fact, had he acted otherwise, his behaviour must have exhibited a constraint which his soul was too

Thus perished Sir Thomas More, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. The furious controversies of the times caused him to be idolized by one party, and censured above measure by another ; but

elevated to feel ; he must have died a different man from what he lived. Such is the idea entertained of his behaviour on the scaffold, not only by his partial biographers, but by the most enlightened historians who have had occasion to mention it. Hume, after recounting them, adds, that “ *nothing was wanting to the glory of this end*, but a better cause, more free from weakness and superstition.” Lord Herbert exemplifies his wonderful fortitude by the same anecdotes ; and Lord Bacon, in his Apophthegms, mentions the last of them in terms expressive of commendation. But the applause of Addison, whose delicate sense, both of morality and propriety, can only be questioned by those whose own feelings are obtuse, is still more pointedly expressed. In the Spectator, No. 349, he thus speaks of More’s behaviour on the scaffold : “ That innocent mirth, which had been so conspicuous in his life, did not forsake him to the last. He maintained the same cheerfulness of heart upon the scaffold which he used to show at his table ; and, upon laying his head on the block, gave instances of that good humour with which he had always entertained his friends, in the most ordinary occurrences. His death was of a piece with his life. There was in it nothing new, forced, or affected. He did not look upon the severing of his head from his body as a circumstance that ought to produce any change in the disposition of his mind ; and as he died under a fixed and settled hope of immortality, he thought any unusual degree of sorrow or concern improper on such an occasion, as had nothing in it which could deject or terrify him.” Such is Addison’s opinion of the last scene of his life. But it is to be recollected that this sporting with death would be as ridiculous in a man of a different character, as it was noble in More. “ What,” continues Addison, “ was philosophy in this extraordinary man, would be frenzy in one who does not resemble him, as well in the cheerfulness of his temper, as in the sanctity of his life and manners.”

his fate excited unfeigned regret among those of all parties who could duly appreciate his talents, his acquirements, and virtues. By those who knew him best, and who shared his intimate friendship, his loss was bewailed as an irreparable calamity. "More is dead," says Erasmus, in the accents of despondency, "More, whose breast was purer than snow, whose genius was excellent above all his nation." *

Henry himself seemed to be touched with compunction at the act of which he had been guilty; but it was only such compunction as can be felt by a tyrant inured to the murder of his subjects. When informed of the death of More, he rose, in apparent confusion, from the game at which he played with Anne Boleyn, and, to ease his own feelings, sternly reproached her with being the cause of this man's death. † But here the expressions of his regret terminated, and the remains, as well as the family of his victim, were still the objects of his unmanly vengeance. ‡ It was only by earnest prayers that his daughter Margaret at length obtained permission to remove her father's body from the Tower to the monument which he had erected for himself. It was not without danger that she, some time afterwards, conveyed

* Epistle Dedicatory to the Ecclesiastes.

† Stapleton, p. 365. More, p. 275.

‡ Ibid.

away his head, which, as was usual in regard to traitors, had been fixed on London Bridge; but, after a short imprisonment for this offence, she was graciously discharged. His fortune had been acquired by private industry, and impaired in the public service, yet the remnant of it was seized as a forfeiture to the crown, although he had endeavoured to secure it to his family, by executing conveyances previous to his condemnation for treason; and in such abject misery were they left, that they were unable even to purchase a winding-sheet for his remains! It was supplied by the liberality of a friend.* His family were driven from his favourite residence at Chelsea, which soon passed into the hands of a court favourite.† And

* More, p. 276.

† The fate of this house seemed to correspond in singularity with the fortunes of its master; for perhaps no private mansion was ever inhabited by such a succession of illustrious possessors. By Henry it was granted to Sir William Pawlet, afterwards Marquis of Winchester, and Lord High Treasurer. From his family it successively passed into the hands of Lord Dacre, the great Lord Burleigh, the Earl of Salisbury his son, the Earl of Lincoln, Sir Anthony Gorges, the Earl of Middlesex Lord Treasurer, Villiers Duke of Buckingham, Sir Bulstrode Whitlocke, one of Cromwell's peers, the witty and profligate Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Bristol, the Duke of Beaufort, and finally of Sir Hans Sloane in 1738, who pulled it down two years afterwards. *Lysons' Environs of London*, Vol. II. p. 80. The choice of so many noble possessors, if it gives testimony to the taste of More, in the selection of the scite, and the disposition of the grounds, is no less a satire on the President of the Royal Society, who, amidst all his pro-

all that they received from Henry was a pittance to the widow of twenty pounds a-year ! His son, John More, a man remarkable for the innocence of his manners, and, indeed, of too moderate abilities to be anywise dangerous, had nearly shared the fate of his father. Condemned for refusing the oath of supremacy afterwards prescribed, he was, however, pardoned by an act of royal clemency.

Character. We have now seen the rise, progress, and end of a man, affording an example worthy of imitation to every individual of his race. In private life, as a son, a husband, a father, a master, and a friend, no character can be contemplated with greater delight, no conduct imitated with more certain advantage. Careful to discharge every duty, and limiting his good offices only by the extent of his power, he found all the relations which united him to his fellow men, cemented by affection, and strengthened by gratitude. In the circle of his own family he persuaded where he might have commanded, he allured where he might have threatened, he was familiar where he might have been haughty, he employed ridicule in place of severity, and mingled good humour with every injunction : he was thus beloved without any mix-

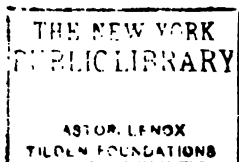
fessions of fine taste and regard for antiquities, levelled this ancient mansion with the ground, and made a present of the beautiful gateway, added by Inigo Jones, to some friend, for the ornament of an unknown villa.

ture of dread, and obeyed with all the alacrity of affection. No man was more successful in enforcing his instructions by example ; and the flow of happiness which seemed to arise from his activity, his love of literature, his integrity, his beneficence, his piety, proved an irresistible admonition to the practice of his precepts.

His public life exhibited a rare combination of virtues and vicissitudes. Without having ever deviated, or been suspected to deviate, from the strictest integrity, he rose to the greatest eminence as a lawyer, and the highest rank as a statesman. Without having embarked in one court intrigue, or been guilty of one improper compliance, he obtained the complete confidence of an arbitrary monarch : he enjoyed this confidence for years, without requesting one personal favour. The only art which he employed to obtain success in his profession, or the favour of his prince, was the strenuous discharge of his duty ; yet such a reputation did he acquire, that he was loaded with professional business amidst an extensive competition, and compelled by his sovereign to accept of the most coveted public employments. As a pleader, his exertions were never unapplauded ; as a judge, his decisions were never controverted ; as a statesman, his counsels were never suspected. In one unfortunate conjuncture, we find the prejudices of education, and the violence of theological dissensions,

confounding his better judgment, and hurrying him into acts which neither justice nor humanity can pass uncensured ; yet, even then, he acted from mistaken principle.

The succeeding transactions of his life present only objects of admiration. Anxiously procuring his dismissal from office, when he could no longer serve his country without sacrificing his integrity, he retired from power, splendour, and affluence, to all the privations of a poverty, the fruit of his disinterested patriotism. Yet his cheerfulness suffered no diminution ; and if he looked back on his former state, it was only with a smile of satisfaction at the temptations which he had escaped. As the evening of life darkened around him, his unaltered mind appeared only more brilliant from the contrast. Many have met an undeserved death on the scaffold with undaunted heroism ; but few have so completely overcome the apprehension of quitting life, the anguish of parting with friends, and indignation at the malice of enemies, as to display, in their behaviour, no constrained fortitude, no affected tranquillity, no ill-disguised bitterness at the injustice of their fate. Yet such was the case of More ; so well did his mind appear reconciled to this world, and tempered for the next, that he seemed well pleased with his stay, yet gratified with his departure.



suits, and seemed resolute to excel his fellow-students, by the certain means of incessant application. That he might daily devote several hours to study, without any hazard of interruption, he made an agreement with the bell-ringer to be called up every morning at four o'clock. The strength of his constitution, however, did not correspond with the ardour of his mind ; for, in consequence of much sitting, without proper intervals of exercise, he contracted a painful humour in his legs ; and though subsequently cured of this distemper, his physicians considered it as a principal cause of that inveterate gout which embittered the latter part of his life. *

His indefatigable industry soon led to a proficiency which drew on him the particular notice of his teachers. The master of the college encouraged his perseverance by occasional presents, † but his ambition seems to have required no such stimulant. He began, at sixteen, to put in practice the methods then usual of acquiring literary celebrity, by delivering a public lecture. His first topic was the logic of the schools ; but, three years afterwards, he ventured to comment on the Greek language, which had hitherto been cultivated with more eagerness than success. He was afterwards

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 6.

† Fuller's History of the University of Cambridge, p. 95.

ambitious of excelling as a general scholar ; and successively directed his industry to the various branches of literature then cultivated at the university.*

When he was supposed to have laid a sufficient foundation of useful knowledge, he was removed from the university to Gray's Inn, where he applied himself to the study of the law, with the same method and industry as he had observed at Cambridge. He found leisure also for several collateral pursuits : the antiquities of the kingdom, and more especially the pedigrees and fortunes of the most distinguished families, occupied much of his attention ; and, such was his progress in these pursuits, that no man of his time was accounted a more complete adept in heraldry.† This species of information, had he adhered to his destination for the bar, might have been of little utility ; but, in his career of a statesman, it often proved of essential advantage. His practice was to record with his pen every thing worthy of notice which occurred to him either in reading or observation, arranging this information in the most methodical manner,—a singular example of diligence, which is authenticated to posterity by collections of his manuscripts, still preserved in many public and

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 7.

† Bacon's Works, Vol. IV. p. 358, edit. 1740.

private libraries. While, from this practice, he derived, besides other advantages, an uncommon facility in committing his thoughts to writing, he neglected not to cultivate an accomplishment still more essential to his intended profession,—a ready and graceful enunciation. By frequenting various companies, and entering into free discussion, he learnt to express himself with ease and confidence ; while the extent of his information, and the soundness of his judgment, prevented his fluency from degenerating into declamation.

Introduction
at Court.

These acquisitions, united to a singular industry, must have raised him, at an early period, to great eminence in his profession, had not an incident, which introduced him to the notice of Henry VIII., soon diverted his attention to a different career. Cecil, having accidentally met, in the presence-chamber, with two Irish priests, who had come to court in the train of O'Neil, their chieftain, happened to enter into an argument with them on the pope's supremacy, of which they were zealous abettors ; and, by his superior knowledge and fluency, so baffled his antagonists, that they began to vent their uneasy feelings in violent expressions. This contest was conducted in Latin ; and the particulars of it having been reported to Henry, the monarch, pleased with this indication of talents, and still more with the successful refutation of the pope's supremacy, desired to see the

young man ; and, in the course of a long conversation, conceived so favourable an opinion of his abilities, that he resolved to take him into his service, and directed his father (the Master of the Robes) to find out an office which might suit him. As no suitable situation happened to be vacant at the time, his father pitched on the reversion of the *Custos Brevium*, in the Common Pleas, which was readily granted. *

From the time of this introduction at court, which happened within the first year of his attendance at Gray's Inn, and in the twenty-second of his age, though Cecil still continued his application to the law, his mind appears to have been more intently fixed on political advancement. A very prudent and honourable alliance, which he this year contracted by marriage, proved an effectual channel to future preferment. Introduced by his father-in-law, Sir John Cheke, a man of great respectability and influence, to the Earl of Hertford, maternal uncle to the young Prince Edward, and afterwards better known as Duke of Somerset ; he was enabled to cultivate a connection which, in a few years, elevated him to the highest offices. †

About the commencement of the reign of Edward VI., he succeeded to his office of *Custos*

1542.

1547.
Appointed
Custos Bre-
vium.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 9.

† Camden's Annal. Eliz. p. 774.

Brevium, which brought him a revenue of two hundred and forty pounds a year, equal to more than a thousand pounds in the present age. While this accession to his fortune placed him in comparative affluence, and enabled him to prosecute his plans more at ease, a new family connection, which he formed about the same time, opened to him the fairest access to royal patronage. His first wife having died in the second year of their marriage, leaving him a son, he now married a daughter of Sir Anthony Cook, the director of the young king's studies, a gentleman who derived from his situation an influence confirmed by his talents and virtue. * Few men have more directly accelerated their rise by matrimonial alliances than Cecil; yet such were the excellent qualities of this lady, that we might consider his attachment to her the result rather of personal affection, than of a view to political advancement.

Master of
the Re-
quests.

His preferment under the new reign was not neglected by Somerset, to whose friendship he was recommended by various circumstances. While his talents and consummate application rendered him most useful to any one placed at the head of affairs; his decided attachment to the Reformation gave him at this period a particular claim to public trusts. The protector, eager to extend his

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 9.

popularity by accelerating those changes in religion, which were now so generally desired, committed the departments of government to the hands of such as were known to be firm advocates of the Reformation; and, on this occasion, he created Cecil Master of the Requests, an appointment of trust and distinction. *

In the latter part of the same year, the young statesman attended his patron in the expedition against Scotland, and was present at the battle of Pinkey, where the arms of England proved so decisively victorious. Here he very narrowly escaped destruction: a friend, observing a cannon directly pointed at him, pushed him out of its line, and, in the very act, had his own arm unfortunately shattered by the ball. † Cecil, with his usual diligence, wrote an account of this expedition. On returning home, he enjoyed various advantages for prosecuting his views at court, and his talents were well calculated to second his opportunities. The insight into the characters of those around him, which he derived from careful habits of observation, enabled him to suit his behaviour to persons and circumstances; and the prudent reserve of his conversation, joined to a perfect command of temper, preserved him from those imprudences which so often bar the way to promotion. He applied

Secretary
of State.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 10.

† Ibid.

himself to gain the entire confidence of Somerset ; and having unrestrained access to the young prince, both from the friendship of the protector, and the situation of his father-in-law, he quickly acquired the esteem and attachment of Edward. Somerset readily listened to the solicitations of his nephew in behalf of their mutual favourite, and, in the following year, promoted Cecil to the office of Secretary of State. *

1548.

Involved in
the fall of
Somerset.

With a rapidity proportioned to his merits and his address, Cecil had now attained one of the highest stations in the government ; but his continuance on this envied height depended so much on the conduct of others, that the most consummate prudence on his part could not render him secure. He, also, was drawn along in the fall of his patron, which took place in little more than a year. Somerset appears to have been one of those unfortunate men, whose errors proceed rather from weakness than from vice, and whose good intentions are perpetually counteracted by a lamentable imprudence. Ambitious, rather than qualified to govern, he had taken advantage of his popularity to engross, in his own person, the whole powers of the council of regency, to which Henry, by his will, had entrusted the government ; and though he showed no inclination to abuse his authority,

1549.

* Lord Burghley's Diary.

yet he displayed his ascendancy with an offensive ostentation. A profusion and magnificence, which might have served to increase his influence, contributed, by his imprudent management, to ruin the popularity which he so fondly courted. While he too eagerly grasped at wealth to support his expences, the fortune which he suddenly amassed made his integrity suspected ; and, on his pulling down several churches to procure more splendid materials for erecting his palace, the act was reprobated as sacrilege, and his impiety regarded with horror. Even the best intended measures often became, in his unskilful hands, the source of new calamities. By his rash and ill-concerted attempts to redress the grievances of the common people, he not only provoked the nobility, but led the inflamed minds of the people themselves into excesses, which he was afterwards obliged to repress by severe military executions. His popularity at length became so much reduced, that the other members of the council of regency, whom he had stript of their just authority, ventured to attempt his overthrow ; and, by a well-planned conspiracy, succeeded in committing him and his principal adherents to the Tower.

The chief actor in this plot against Somerset was the Earl of Warwick, son to Dudley, the infamous tool of Henry the Seventh's extortions. Warwick inherited all the avarice and faithlessness

of his father ; and, being possessed of talents both for peace and war, he procured the patronage of Henry the Eighth, who could readily overlook hereditary taint, contracted in executing the mandates of tyranny. By the favour of that monarch, Dudley was successively raised to the rank of nobility, created an admiral, and appointed a member of the council of regency. Yet, inflamed with an ambition which no subordinate honours could satiate, he looked on the minority of Edward as a favourable opportunity for engrossing the chief direction of the government ; and only delayed his attempts until the increasing unpopularity of Somerset, to which he contributed by every art, should ensure their accomplishment. Succeeding, by the conspiracy which he had planned, to the power, though not to the title of the Protector, he surrounded the young king with his creatures, compelled the council to submit to his dictates, and proceeded to secure his ascendancy by new acquisitions of fortune and rank. The last Earl of Northumberland having died without issue, and his brother having been attainted, the title was now extinct, and the estate vested in the crown. Warwick procured a grant of these large possessions, and made himself be created Duke of Northumberland.

Restored to
office.

The views of this new ruler did not long prove adverse to Cecil ; for, after having been detained

in the Tower about three months, he was discharged, and again found himself on the road to fortune. Northumberland, though awed by the previous popularity of Somerset, entertained little apprehension of his talents, and justly calculated that his partizans might be weaned by new prospects from their attachment to so feeble a leader. In Cecil he perceived the double advantage of influence over the young king, and of an uninterrupted application to business, while others wasted their time in cabals and intrigues. Aware, also, that with Cecil ambition was a predominant principle, while his prudence was such as to divert him from all dangerous schemes; Northumberland might expect that this statesman would be faithful to those immediately possessed of power, and would prefer the prospect of present aggrandisement to the forlorn generosity of adhering to the ruined fortunes of Somerset. But whatever were the views of Northumberland, Cecil was, by his means, again appointed Secretary of State; and, receiving the honour of knighthood, was admitted into the privy council. * 1551.

This sudden release and subsequent elevation, by the enemy of his old patron, have exposed the motives of Cecil to suspicion. It has been alleged, that he had a secret understanding with Northum-

* King Edward's Journal. Stow's Annals.

berland even before the fall of Somerset, and that his new preferment was the reward of his treachery. But while no grounds are produced for these accusations, the events which they are adduced to explain seem otherwise sufficiently accounted for. In joining Northumberland, Cecil abandoned none of his principles ; for the same measures, both in regard to religion and politics, were now pursued, as under the Protector : and if his conduct, in uniting with the decided enemy of his patron, be thought little consistent with honour or generosity, he only acted a part which Somerset himself speedily imitated. Northumberland, having completed the degradation of his rival, by extorting from him a public confession that he had been guilty of rashness, folly, and indiscretion, accounted him now so little formidable, that he ventured to affect the praise of generosity, by restoring him, not only to liberty, but to his seat in the council. Somerset, as mean in adversity as ostentatious in his better fortune, gladly accepted the boon ; and, after all the indignities which he had undergone, consented to give his daughter, Lady Jane Seymour, in marriage to Lord Dudley, the son of his adversary.

But the ambition of Northumberland, and the indiscretion of Somerset, soon converted their external appearances of amity into more fatal dissensions. Although the late protector, by his imprudence and want of spirit, had become much degra-

ded in the public estimation, yet, in the day of his humiliation, the envy once felt towards him subsided into a better feeling; while the pride and ambition of his rival failed not to excite considerable odium. His reviving popularity awakened the jealousy of Northumberland, and his indiscretion, ere long, afforded a pretext for his destruction. While the mortifications which he had experienced could not fail to rankle in his bosom, his crafty antagonist endeavoured to goad him on to some rash and criminal enterprise. The creatures of Northumberland, who gained his confidence to precipitate his ruin, first inflamed his resentment, and then caught his hasty expressions of revenge; they suggested to him plans for insurrection, for assassinating Northumberland, and then disclosed them as accusations against him. When a sufficient number of such charges had been accumulated, Somerset was suddenly arrested; tried before a jury of peers, among whom were Northumberland and some of his principal enemies; found guilty of a capital crime, and led, along with several of his friends, to the scaffold.

The part which Cecil acted, during these renewed calamities of his early patron, seems more reconcilable to prudence than to gratitude. It is said, that when Somerset, some time before his arrest, sent for him, and communicated to him his apprehensions, the secretary, instead of suggesting any means to

Conduct to
Somerset.

avoid his impending danger, coldly replied, "That if he was innocent, he might trust to that ; and if he was otherwise, he could only pity him." * Pity, indeed, if he really felt it, was all that he bestowed ; for it does not appear that he interposed, either publicly or privately, to avert the destruction of his former patron. And when we consider the character of Somerset, we must allow that such an interposition would have been as imprudent as it was likely to be unavailing. The weakness and irresolution of this nobleman were such, that no dependence could be placed on his executing any scheme proposed for his safety ; and as he was surrounded by spies who insinuated themselves into his confidence, any beneficial intelligence communicated to him, could scarcely have failed to reach his inveterate adversary. In these circumstances, Cecil, by attempting the preservation of Somerset, would have incurred an imminent hazard of sharing in his destruction. Without benefiting his patron, he would probably have lost his fortune, his liberty, or his life ; leaving behind him only the praise of unsuccessful generosity.

Diligence in
office.

But whether we respect his prudence, or censure his ingratitude on this occasion, we cannot but applaud his conduct as a minister. While the court of England teemed with cabals, which occupied the

* King Edward's Journal.

incessant attention of the other public men, the secretary was diligently employed in executing his official duties, and in devising schemes for the discharge of the public debt, or the improvement of commerce. There still remains a complete statement of the king's debts in the month of February 1551, printed from a manuscript drawn up by Cecil, and which must have comprehended the whole of the public responsibility at that period, since neither the debts nor the revenues of the king were as yet separated from those of the nation. *

An important change, effected about this time in the commerce of London, is also attributed to his counsels. The carrying trade of the north of Europe, and of England in particular, had hitherto been engrossed, almost exclusively, by the merchants of the Hanse Towns. As the foreign intercourse, conducted through this channel, was found particularly productive to the revenue, it became an object with our monarchs to promote it to the utmost; and with this view, Henry the Third induced a company of these merchants to settle in England, by the lure of a patent containing various privileges, exempting them from the heavy duties paid by other aliens, and placing them nearly on a footing with natives. This corporation was called, from their place of residence, the Merchants of the

Effects a
change in
the Carry-
ing Trade.

* See this paper in Strype's Memorials of Edward VI. Book ii.

Steel-yard, and effectually excluded all rivals from a competition—other foreigners by their exclusive privileges, and the English by their superior capital and skill. They continued, accordingly, from the time of their settlement, to engross nearly the whole continental trade of England. Their commerce was advantageous to the natives, as it opened a market to their produce, and induced them to devote their labour and capital to agriculture and manufactures; but it was attended, in the eye of the public, with various disadvantages. The gains of each individual, who partook of this monopoly, were apparently greater than those of the natives engaged in agriculture, manufactures, or internal commerce; and the collective wealth of these foreign merchants was doubly conspicuous from their residence in one spot. The jealousy of the English was strongly excited. They complained that the natives had but toil for their portion, while strangers ran away with all the profit. Besides these imaginary evils, this mode of carrying on trade was attended with some real disadvantages. As it was chiefly conducted by foreign vessels and foreign seamen, it afforded little accession to the maritime strength of the country; a circumstance which, on the breaking out of a war, was felt as a serious evil. Moreover, these merchants, on realizing a fortune, were apt to depart, and transfer to their own country that capital which, in the hands

of natives, would have improved the soil, and accelerated the industry of this realm. The native merchants had often remonstrated against the privileges of these foreigners ; but Cecil seems to have been the first minister who effectually attended to their complaints. In consequence of his representations to the Council, the merchants of the Steel-yard were deprived of their charter, and subjected to the same impositions as other aliens.*

From this measure, as it was speedily followed by a large increase of the shipping and foreign commerce of England, Cecil has derived much reputation ; yet, it is but too indicative of the unacquaintance of the age with the principles of trade. To abrogate the monopoly was a measure of evident propriety, in as much as, like all monopolies, it tended to limit the extent of commercial dealings, obliging our countrymen to sell their commodities somewhat lower, and to pay for foreign articles somewhat higher than they would have done, had the competition been open. But, in what way ought this irregularity to have been remedied ? Not merely by cancelling the privileges of the Steel-yard merchants, and subjecting them to the same extra duties as other aliens, but by putting all merchants, whether natives or foreign, on a footing of equality. Such a measure would, it may be alleged, have retarded the

* Hayward's Life and Reign of Edward VI.

rise of the native merchants, inferior as they then were to foreigners in capital and experience : but in this, as in all other cases, the course which industry and capital would of themselves have taken, would have been the most advantageous to all parties. Our merchants, confining themselves for a season to the inland trade, it would have expanded more promptly, when our foreign trade absorbed little of our pecuniary means ; and the latter also would have fallen eventually into their hands, in consequence not of acts of exclusion, but of the various advantages possessed by natives over foreigners.

Proposes alterations in the staple.

But had Cecil, or any other statesman in that age, attempted to admit foreigners on the footing of natives, he would have been represented by public clamour as aggravating the evil which he professed to remedy. The disadvantages under which Cecil laboured are apparent in the fate of another project, which he entertained for the benefit of commerce. As the means of conveying mercantile intelligence were in former times extremely defective, and the regulations for levying the revenue were very imperfect, it was usual to fix by law a staple, or regular market, for the chief commodities of a country, and oblige all its inhabitants to convey them thither for sale. Foreign merchants might thus reckon on a regular market, and government had the best opportunity of levying its imposts both on

exports and imports. The staple of our wool, and other chief articles of exportation, was fixed by an early act of Parliament in certain towns of England, but was afterwards, in the reign of Edward the Third, wholly removed to Calais, which at that period came into our possession. * It was thence transferred to the flourishing but distant port of Antwerp, where it still remained in the reign of Edward the Sixth. Cecil, perceiving the infinite disadvantages to which the exportation of England was subjected by this regulation, proposed to abolish the staple at Antwerp, and, as a far more desirable substitute, to open two free ports in England, one at Southampton, and another at Hull. A paper is still extant, containing the whole of this scheme clearly digested, exhibiting the arguments in its favour, and refuting the objections by which it might be opposed. But his colleagues in office were too little advanced in commercial knowledge, and too much engrossed with state intrigues, to perceive the advantages or concur in the execution of this project.

Cecil, in the meantime, did not neglect to cultivate the attachment of the young king. That prince, whose diligence, knowledge, and discretion, far exceeded his years, seems to have been particularly delighted with a man so eminently distinguished for these qualities. The secretary was ad-

Favour with
Edward.

* 27 Edward III. cap. vii.

mitted into his inmost confidence, and was supposed to have had no small share in the productions ostensibly attributed to Edward. It is said, that the Princess Mary, on receiving a letter from her brother, exhorting her to abjure the errors of Popery, could not help exclaiming as she read it, "Ah! Mr Cecil's pen has taken great pains here." Yet he never employed his ascendancy over the young prince to procure extravagant grants, after the example which had been set by Somerset, Northumberland, and the other courtiers. Aware that a fortune, accumulated by such means, always exposed the possessor to envy, and might probably, in these unsettled times, be the cause of his destruction, he preferred the slower, but more secure method of acquiring wealth by the economical management of his regular salaries. By his appointment as Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, his income now received an addition of a hundred marks a-year; and it appears that after his father's decease, he also held the post of Master of the Robes. *

1558.

Conduct relative to Northumberland's designs.

Soon after this accession of honour and emolument, he found himself exposed, by his official situation, to dangers which all his prudence seemed insufficient to avert. The young king, who, by the extraordinary virtues and accomplishments of

* See a letter to him from Sir Edward Dymocke, in Lodge's Illustrations of British History, Vol. I. p. 186.

his early youth, had taught the nation to look forward with fond expectation to his more mature years, began to exhibit indubitable symptoms of a rapid decline. Amidst the alarm which this unexpected calamity diffused, the ambitious Northumberland began to meditate more daring plans for the confirmation of his power, and even undertook to fix the succession to the crown in his own family. Four females stood next in the order of inheritance : Mary and Elizabeth, daughters of Henry the Eighth ; Mary, Queen of Scots, grand-daughter of Henry's eldest sister ; and the Duchess of Suffolk, daughter of his second sister. The title of the last, although evidently posterior to the others, Northumberland resolved to enforce as preferable to the whole. He represented to Edward, that his two half-sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, having been declared illegitimate by act of Parliament, were for ever debarred from the succession ; that the Queen of Scots having been passed over in his father's will, was also to be considered as excluded ; and that, even had this objection not existed, she ought to be prevented from reducing England as well as Scotland to a province of France, an event which, unless prevented by her exclusion, her marriage with the dauphin rendered inevitable. Availing himself of the king's attachment to the Protestant religion, he depicted the dangers to which it would be exposed, if such

bigotted Catholics as either of the Marys ascended the throne ; and as this objection did not apply to Edward's favourite sister Elizabeth, who had been educated in the principles of the Reformation, he urged, that it was impossible to devise any pretext for excluding one sister, without excluding both. The prince, enfeebled by disease, and surrounded by the creatures of Northumberland, was at length overcome by his arguments and importunities, and consented to fix the succession in the Duchess of Suffolk, who was willing to wave her title in favour of her daughter, the Lady Jane Grey. To complete this artful scheme, Northumberland now procured the Lady Jane in marriage to his fourth son, Lord Guilford Dudley, and enjoyed the prospect of continuing to manage the affairs of the kingdom at his pleasure, and of transmitting the succession to his posterity.

For this alteration in the succession to the throne, Northumberland obtained from the prince a patent, and required that it should be signed by all the members of the privy council ; a concession which the dread of his vengeance extorted even from those most averse to the transaction. Cecil, among the rest, affixed his name to the patent, but whether from inclination or compulsion has been disputed. While he is charged by some with having been very active in the enterprises of the duke, and with having assisted in drawing up the instru-

ment for altering the succession, * he himself, in a memorial which he afterwards drew up in his justification, asserts, that both threats and promises were employed in vain to extort his concurrence in the attempt; that he refused to subscribe the patent as a privy counsellor; and that he was at length only prevailed on, by the king's earnest entreaty, to write his name as witness to the royal signature. The character of Cecil leaves us, indeed, no room to suspect that he entered into the views of Northumberland farther than his own immediate safety required. He might have been sufficiently willing, had a fair opportunity offered, to set aside Mary the next heiress, from whose bigoted attachment to popery he had nothing to hope, and every thing to apprehend. But the reasons which might have led him to oppose Mary would have induced him to support Elizabeth, and he knew that the objections against the title of Lady Jane were too weighty to be removed by the patent of a minor on his death-bed. Although Parliament, with whom the ultimate right of confirming or altering the order of succession was acknowledged to reside, had enabled Henry the Eighth to dispose of the crown by will, yet, as it had not empowered Edward to alter this disposition, his patent could not confer a legal title till

* Hayward, Vol. II. p. 237.

ratified by a new act of the legislature. But amidst the general indignation excited by the ambition and rapacity of Northumberland, was such a sanction likely to be obtained? or, if obtained, to ensure a general acquiescence? Influenced by such considerations, Cecil seems to have withdrawn himself, as far as personal safety would allow, from an enterprise originating in extravagant ambition, and likely to terminate in the ruin of its abettors. It is said, that when he found the project in agitation, he made such a disposition of his effects as might give them the best chance of security, in the event of his being imprisoned, or obliged to quit the kingdom. *

Retirement
from public
affairs.

On the death of Edward, Cecil found himself, along with the rest of the privy council, in the power of Northumberland; but perceiving that total failure was soon to overtake the illegal measures of that infatuated nobleman, he resolutely refused to draw up the proclamation declaring the title of Lady Jane, or to write in its vindication; and the duke was not then in a situation to punish his disobedience. Soon afterwards he found means, along with the other privy-counsellors, to escape and join Mary, who had already been proclaimed queen, and who was pleased to receive him very graciously. As he knew that, among her partizans,

* Burnet's Hist. of Reform. Vol. II. p. 223.

he had many enemies, and that they had already made some unsuccessful attempts to prejudice her against him, he took advantage of her present favourable disposition, to obtain a general pardon for whatever might have been culpable in his past conduct ; and with this indemnity he determined for the present to retire from public affairs. Mary, acquainted with his sagacity and great talents for business, was desirous to retain him in her service, and tendered to him the appointment which he had hitherto held ; but as the change of his religion was an indispensable condition, he could not be prevailed on to accept these offers. * He was attached firmly and conscientiously to the reformed church ; but had his religious principles been less sincere, prudence might have withheld him from embarking in the new government. The bigotry of Mary, and the violence of her prime minister, Bishop Gardiner, made it easy to foresee that the restoration of the Catholic religion would be attempted by fire and sword ; and in the conflict between the zeal of the court, and the resistance of the great majority of the nation, it was impossible not to anticipate sanguinary executions and dangerous convulsions. Cecil appears to have adopted the resolution of keeping aloof from the cabals of either party, and of cultivating the pri-

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 11.

vate friendship of some of the new ministers, without giving any sanction to their public measures. By this means he both provided for his own safety, and was enabled to give occasional support to the cause which he favoured, without exciting the jealousy and resentment of the government.

Connection
with Cardinal
Pole.

The court soon became divided into two factions, of which the one urged the extirpation of heretics by fire and sword, while the other, confiding in the ultimate success of what they deemed the true religion, were of opinion that these violent methods would only harden the minds of men against it. Of these parties, the former was ruled by Bishop Gardiner, a man very indifferent about religion, but naturally of a severe and violent temper, and exasperated, by some injuries, against the Protestants; while the moderate party was headed by Cardinal Pole, a man extremely devoted to his religious tenets, but too politic, if not too humane, to attempt their propagation by violence. Expecting the safety of the Protestants chiefly from the ascendancy of the Cardinal's counsels, Cecil attached himself warmly to his interests. He had procured himself to be nominated one of the honorary mission which had been sent by the court to invite over this prelate, who resided in Italy at the time of Mary's accession; and he appears to have exerted himself successfully in acquiring his confidence, since we find him, in the following

year, attending Pole on an embassy to the continent.

It soon, however, became necessary for Cecil to take a more open part in defence of the Protestants. The Parliament having been induced, by the intrigues of Gardiner, and the bribes which he scattered among the members, to revive the old sanguinary laws against heretics, the court proceeded to carry them into execution with the most unrelenting cruelty. Bishops, venerable for age and virtue, were burnt in their own dioceses, and women are said to have been thrown, in the agonies of childbirth, into the midst of the flames. * Nothing could exceed the horror of the cruelties perpetrated, or the frivolity of the accusations on which the sufferers were condemned. Arrested on mere suspicion, and without having made any open profession of their creed, they were allowed only the alternative of signing a list of religious articles presented to them, or of being committed to the flames. All the established forms of law were now abandoned, and the prosecution of heretics entrusted by the crown to a set of commissioners, whose unlimited powers to try and condemn any one on whom their suspicions might happen to alight, took away the protection of in-

Defence of
the Protest-
ants.
1554.

* Burnet, III. p. 264, from an account of these transactions written or corrected by Cecil.

nocence, and rendered the subjects the sport of caprice or malignity.

A general horror and indignation were the natural consequences of these cruelties ; and in the new Parliament, which was summoned to meet in 1555, the court was made to feel the preponderancy of the Protestant interest, and the futility of its sanguinary proceedings. Notwithstanding the manifest danger of opposition, several measures proposed by government were vehemently resisted by the Commons, and some wholly rejected. They were with difficulty prevailed on to pass an act enabling the queen to restore to the church merely those tenths, first fruits, and impropriations which remained in the hands of the crown ; and could be induced to grant a portion only of the supplies demanded, though by no means exorbitant. They threw out two bills relative to religion ;—one for incapacitating such as were remiss in the prosecution of heretics from being justices of the peace, and another for confiscating the estates of those who had quitted the kingdom on the score of religion. *

In this opposition to the measures of the court, Cecil, who had been chosen, without solicitation, one of the members for Lincolnshire, bore a distinguished part ; and the rejection of the bill for

* Burnet, Vol. II. p. 392.

confiscating the estates of the exiles is, in particular, attributed to the force of his eloquence. This manly conduct exposed him to considerable danger, and he was once called before the privy council; but while the others involved in the same accusation with him were sent to the Tower, he succeeded in obtaining a hearing before he should be committed, and made such a satisfactory defence as procured his immediate acquittal.* The discretion of his conduct had indeed softened the rancour of his religious opponents, and procured him many friends among the Catholics, though convinced of his decided attachment to the Protestant cause. The light in which his opposition in this Parliament appeared to himself, we learn from the diary which he has left behind him:—"On the 21st of October," says he, "the Parliament met at Westminster, and I discharged my duty, as a member, with some danger; for although I had been elected against my inclination, yet I uttered my sentiments freely. I incurred much displeasure by this conduct; but it was better to obey God than men." Having, in the next Parliament, been again chosen to represent the county of Lincoln, he maintained the cause of the persecuted Protestants with the same discreet but undeviating resolution.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 13.

Corresponds
with the
Princess
Elizabeth.

While Cecil, by the reserve and moderation of his conduct, escaped the suspicion of the court, he was privately turning his views towards those changes in the government, which, he foresaw, would soon take place. It was every day more apparent, that the Princess Elizabeth would ascend the throne, and that her elevation would not be long deferred. No prospect now remained that Mary would leave offspring behind her, and the distempers of her mind and body seemed rapidly to subdue her constitution. While a dropsy, which she had at first mistaken for pregnancy, and aggravated by improper treatment, daily impaired her strength, the bad success of all her schemes for the restoration of popery, the general hatred excited by her cruelties, the loss of Calais, which was attributed to her negligence, the cold return which Philip made to her ardent attachment, and the resolution which he had formed of settling in Spain and abandoning her for ever, all preyed on her mind, and hastened her decay. Yet though, in this state of things, Cecil had every inducement to cultivate the favour of Elizabeth, it was only by incurring the most imminent danger that, surrounded as she was by the spies of Mary, any communication could be held with her. By uniting, however, dexterity and circumspection with a cool intrepidity, he found means to open and maintain a private correspondence ; and often conveyed to her

such intelligence as enabled her to avoid the snares of her suspicious and vindictive sister.

The interval of leisure, which he at present enjoyed, he seems to have diligently spent in digesting plans for that order of things which he anticipated in the new reign ; and so well had he matured his ideas, that he was enabled to present Elizabeth, on the very day of her accession, with a memorial, pointing out those affairs which required instant dispatch. Mindful of the favours which she had received in her adversity, and gratified to find a counsellor already prepared to give activity to her government, Elizabeth hastened to reward and secure his services. He was the first person sworn of her privy council, and was at the same time created Secretary of State. *

Secretary of
State ;
1558.

From this time forward, Cecil may be considered as the first minister of Elizabeth, and the principal adviser of her measures. As he knew that on her life depended both his prospects and his safety, since Mary Queen of Scots, the next heir, was a Catholic, entirely directed by her bigoted relatives of the house of Guise ; his attachment was sincere, and his exertions zealous. Elizabeth, possessed of penetration to perceive, and judgment to appreciate, his talents, rested with peculiar confidence on his fidelity and tried abilities. Her passions, her pre-

And Prime
Minister.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 13.

judices, her caprice, made her frequently act in opposition to his sentiments, but none of her ministers or favourites was so generally consulted ; and his cool, deliberate, weighty reasonings, often obtained, from her better judgment, concessions to which her inclinations were extremely averse. As it would be tedious to follow the labours of Cecil in an administration of forty years, we must now relinquish the narrative form, and attempt an outline of his policy, under a few general heads, taking as our text the grand questions which engaged the solicitude of the queen and her minister, in that age of dissension and danger. This will lead us to examine his policy in regard to religion ; his civil policy, or administration of home affairs ; his foreign policy,—towards the Low Countries, Spain, France, Scotland, and Mary Queen of Scots.

Policy relative to religion.

The measures relative to religion were those which most incessantly harassed him during his administration, and which required the greatest caution and management, because his sentiments corresponded ill with the inclinations of his sovereign. At the commencement of the reign of Edward the Sixth, the more gross absurdities of the Romish church, which his father had forcibly retained, were abolished ; and a more rational worship, both in substance and form, established by law. Yet although many further changes were made in the course of this reign, by Archbishop

Cranmer and the other heads of the church, the Reformation was still considered incomplete. King Edward, in his diary, laments that he was prevented, by the opposition of the prejudiced, from restoring the primitive discipline according to his heart's desire ; and in the preface to one of the service-books, published by authority, the framers observed, " that they had gone as far as they could in reforming the church, considering the times they lived in, and hoped that they who came after them would, as they might, do more." * The lamented death of Edward put a period, for the time, to the hopes of further improvement. Mary was no sooner seated on the throne, than she restored the faith and forms, of the Catholic church, acknowledged the supremacy of the pope, reconciled her dominions to the see of Rome, and began, by the most cruel exertions of her authority, to plunge the people into that superstition and ignorance from which they had just emerged. It was to the accession of Elizabeth, who was known to be attached to the reformed religion, that the Protestants now looked forward as the period of their deliverance and triumph ; and Cecil, aware that no object could be more important than to quiet the minds of men in this concern, had urged it upon that princess as the first of her cares.

* Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, Vol. I. p. 73. edit. 1793.

But the views of the queen and her minister, with regard to the extent of the projected Reformation, were far from coinciding. Cecil had learnt, from recent events both in his own and in foreign countries, how many dangers and convulsions might be avoided in religious changes, if government wisely took the lead. He had also observed the channel towards which the current of public opinion was strongly directed. The great majority of the nation had seconded Edward and his council in their successive measures in favour of the reformed worship, and looked forward to further changes, when the successor of that prince unfortunately attempted to tear up his work from the foundation. But the extravagant cruelties of Mary, although they intimidated many into an apparent submission, aggravated the general detestation of the Popish religion. The people, exasperated to behold their countrymen groaning under the torture, or expiring in the flames, now looked with horror, not only on the tenets, but on the rites, the ceremonies, the appendages, of a sanguinary church. Many Englishmen who had sought refuge in exile, having observed the tranquil and flourishing condition of states which had entirely renounced both the tenets and rites of the Romish church, hastened, on the accession of Elizabeth, to apprise their countrymen of those happy effects, and incite them to similar changes. To this state of

public sentiment Cecil might be desirous to accommodate the ecclesiastical establishment of England. The favourite, and confidential adviser of Edward, he seems to have deeply imbibed the reforming spirit of that reign ; and we find him acting as one of the commissioners who prepared a purer code of canon laws, which the death of the young monarch prevented from receiving the royal sanction.

But for a thorough reformation the mind of Elizabeth was by no means prepared. The superstitious tenets which her father thought proper to retain had partly insinuated themselves into her belief ; while her imagination had become still more impressed with the mysterious ceremonies and splendid array of the Catholic worship. She was therefore inclined to draw back from the more advanced measures of her brother's reign, and would have been content with a very few changes in doctrine and form. Yet Cecil had very powerful arguments to induce her concurrence with his plans. He could represent that the voice of the nation was loudly in favour of the Reformation : that the ill success of her sister, and the odium which she had incurred, proved the danger of attempting to maintain the worship of Rome : that the Protestants, both at home and abroad, looked up to her as their only hope, and would prove the firmest supporters of her government : that the Catholics, on the other hand, acknowledged Mary Queen of

Scots as the legitimate heiress of the throne, and were ready to make the most dangerous attempts in support of her title : that the more completely the minds of her subjects became alienated from the doctrines and rites of the Roman church, the more decidedly they would be united against the claims of her rival : and that it was impossible to be reconciled to Rome without giving up that supremacy in religious matters which her father had accounted among his proudest titles. *

* When we look into the arguments which Camden and Burnet have, on this occasion, put into the mouth of Cecil, we shall perceive that these historians have framed his discourse rather from his known principles and the circumstances of the times, than from any real documents. Yet it must be acknowledged, that the discourses which they attribute to him possess a verisimilitude that does not pass the licence usually permitted to historians. But Mr Hume, although he expressly refers to these writers as his authorities, not only new-models and varies their account, but even makes Cecil speak like a fellow-sceptic of the eighteenth century. According to him, the minister assures his sovereign that she may safely venture on any reformation she chooses, for "the nation had of late been so much accustomed to these revolutions, that men had lost all idea of truth and falsehood on such subjects." This representation, of which no trace is to be found in Camden or Burnet, is the more objectionable, that it is inconsistent, not only with verisimilitude, but with fact. That Cecil, so distinguished as a zealous Protestant, should have spoken thus lightly of religious tenets, is as incredible as that Elizabeth, who, on several occasions, was ready to sacrifice her interests to her bigotry, should listen to such a discourse : and still more absurd is it to suppose that a minister so sagacious, and a princess so penetrating, should have so egregiously mistaken the state of men's minds, as to believe them wholly indif-

By such considerations Cecil obtained the consent of Elizabeth to the restoration of the Protestant worship ; but the plan which he first laid before the privy-council, and afterwards before parliament, for the new establishment, did not, in its provisions, go beyond that which had been adopted at the commencement of Edward the Sixth's reign. * Yet even to the moderate retrenchments thus made in the Catholic worship, the queen was with difficulty reconciled ; and she went so far as to declare that she would not have passed the act for these changes, had it not contained one saving clause which entitled her " to ordain and publish such further ceremonies and rules as may be for the advancement of God's glory, and edifying his church, and the reverence of Christ's holy mysteries and sacraments." †

But although Cecil exerted himself strenuously to procure reformation in the church, his cool and temperate mind was little moved by religious animosities, and was willing to tolerate the Catholics, provided they engaged in no dangerous attempts against the state. The maxims on which Eliza-

ferent to those very changes to which so many had signalized their attachment at the stake, and *all* the bishops affirmed their aversion by a resignation of their benefices. The ferment of religious opinions was perhaps never greater than at that very period.

* Bacon's Works, Vol. IV. p. 374, edit. 1740.

† Neal's Hist. of the Puritans, Vol. I. p. 130.

beth and her ministers professed to found their conduct in matters of religion were, first, "That consciences are not to be forced, but to be won and reduced by the force of truth, by the aid of time, and the use of all good means of instruction and, persuasion ;" and, secondly, "That causes of conscience, when they exceed their bounds, and prove to be matter of faction, lose their nature ; and that sovereign princes ought distinctly to punish the practice or contempt, though coloured with the pretences of conscience and religion." * The first of these maxims corresponded entirely with the moderation of Cecil ; and the second, although capable of very different interpretations, according to the mildness or violence of the expounders, was, in his hands, a sufficiently safe principle. While the Catholics, enraged at the sagacity with which he detected, and the vigour with which he counteracted, all their enterprises, charged him loudly with cruelty towards them, they still were unable to produce any instance in which his severity exceeded what the immediate security of government appeared to demand. †

* Bacon's Works, Vol. IV. p. 360. Also Knollys's Letter to Cretoy in Burnet's History of the Reformation.

† Bacon, Vol. IV. p. 361, 362. In a letter, in which he replies to some applications to mitigate his rigours against the papists, Burleigh affirms that these rigours were exaggerated, that they amounted only to very gentle penalties, and were employed solely

The queen still gave strong indications of an attachment to the forms of the old religion. Although prevailed on to command the more obnoxious monuments of idolatry to be removed from the churches, yet the service in her own chapel was still attended with such ceremonies and splendour, that foreigners could distinguish it from the Roman, only by its being performed in English. Here the choristers appeared in their surplices, and the priests in their copes: the altar, in the midst of which stood a massy crucifix of silver, was furnished with rich plate, and two gilt candlesticks with lighted candles: the service, on solemn festivals, was sung, not only with the sound of organs, but of cornets, sackbuts, and other musical instruments: and, that nothing might be wanting to its ancient solemnity, the ceremonies observed by the knights of the Garter in their adoration towards the altar, which had been abolished by King Ed-

against the known and active enemies of government. "In very truth," says he, "whereof I know not to the contrary, there is no Catholic persecuted to the danger of life here, but such as profess themselves, by obedience to the pope, to be no subjects to the queen. And although their outward pretence be, to be sent from the seminaries to convert people to their religion, yet, without reconciling of them from their obedience to the queen, they never give them absolution. Such in our realm as refuse to come to our churches, and yet do not discover their obedience to the queen, be taxed with fines, according to the law, without danger of their lives." Birch's Memoirs, Vol. I. p. 94.

ward, and revived by Queen Mary, were now retained. * As Elizabeth advanced in years, these propensities seem gradually to have increased ; for, though she was obliged to guard against the Catholics as her inveterate enemies, though she had been excommunicated by the pope, and lived in perpetual danger from the plots, insurrections, and invasions of his partizans, yet Cecil found considerable difficulty in dissuading her from bringing the state of the church nearer the old religion. It was only by a firm and spirited interposition that he could prevent her from absolutely prohibiting the marriage of the clergy ; and she is said to have often repented that she had gone so far in her concessions. † When the dean of St Paul's, in a sermon preached before her, had spoken with some disapprobation of the sign of the cross, she called aloud to him from her closet, to desist from that ungodly digression, and return to his text. On another occasion, when one of her chaplains had preached a sermon in defence of the real presence, which he would scarcely have ventured to do had not her sentiments been well understood, she openly gave him thanks for his pains and piety. ‡ The Protestants, strongly united as they were to her by every tie of interest, could not, without some mur-

* Neal, Vol. I. p. 144.

† Ibid. p. 158.

‡ Warner's Ecclesiast. Hist. Vol. II. p. 427.

mours and indignation, observe her predilection for the rites of their opponents.

But while Cecil found Elizabeth ready to show the Catholics every indulgence which the public safety could admit, all his influence and entreaties were insufficient to procure a similar lenity for another class of her subjects. A considerable portion of the people eagerly desired a more thorough reformation than had been accomplished under King Edward, and the Protestants soon became divided into those who conformed, and those who would not conform, to the institutions of Elizabeth. Yet since the non-conformists, or puritans, (for so they were now called from affecting a superior purity in worship and morals,) differed from the adherents of the church in no point of faith, but merely in certain external forms, a few concessions on either side might have prevented the disunion. But this was not the age of mutual forbearance, and the party of the established church were ill prepared for limitations to the interference of government. They did not see that, while it was the duty of government to provide a competent number of well qualified religious teachers, and to draw up regulations for their direction in respect both to the substance and the mode of their instructions, it was equally its duty to go no farther, and to beware of turning their proposed benefits into oppression, by forcing obnoxious opinions and

forms on the public. Elizabeth, holding very different sentiments from these, not only prescribed peculiar forms for the religious worship of her people, but was determined that they should use no other. To these the puritans objected, because they had been previously employed in the popish worship as mystical symbols, and were associated in the minds of the people with the grossest superstition. No worldly consideration would induce them to assume what they accounted appendages of idolatry; while the queen, on her part, prepared to employ all her authority in support of the prescribed forms.

Finding that her council, the ablest and wisest council that England ever saw, were decidedly averse to measures which threatened to involve the nation in dangerous dissensions, she resolved to effect her purpose by means of some of the bishops, particularly Archbishop Parker, who readily and zealously entered into her views.* The severities to which these men now proceeded were only surpassed by the frivolity of their ostensible cause. A fervent attachment to the use of surplices, corner-caps, tippetts, the cross in baptism, and the ring in marriage, were, in their eyes, the distinguishing characteristics of a Christian; and any dislike to these forms was accounted a sufficient crime to

* Neal, Vol. I. p. 192.

subject the most learned and pious clergyman to imprisonment and exile ; or, as a mitigated punishment, to be turned out of his living, and consigned with his family to indigence. The most pernicious effects necessarily flowed from these severities : while the church was weakened by the loss of many able divines, and degraded by the introduction of men who could barely read the prayer-book and write their own names, the people began every where to collect around their expelled teachers, and to form conventicles apart from the establishment. Yet these mischievous consequences only set the queen and her bishops on framing new statutes to reach the refractory ; and at length even the laity were brought within their grasp, by an act which provided that non-attendance at public worship in the parish churches should be punished with imprisonment, banishment, and, if the exile returned, with death. An arbitrary commission was appointed with full powers to bring all religious offenders to punishment ; and as any resistance to the injunctions of the queen, as supreme head of the church, was at length construed into sedition and treason, many subjects of unquestioned loyalty were imprisoned, banished, and brought to ruin.

Nothing could exceed the imperious demeanour which some of the prelates, confident of royal support, now assumed. Archbishop Parker, having,

from a wish to display his authority, commanded one of his suffragans to suppress certain meetings which the clergy of the same neighbourhood were accustomed to hold for their mutual improvement, the privy-council, who looked on these exercises as extremely beneficial, since they greatly contributed to diffuse knowledge at a period when the clergy in general were ill instructed, countermanded this injunction of the primate, and ordered that these meetings should receive every encouragement. The prelate, however, having represented to the queen the danger to which her supremacy would be exposed, if he, her vicegerent, should thus be counteracted, readily procured her direct interference in support of his authority; and the council had the mortification to find the *exercises*, as they were called, suppressed not only in one diocese, but throughout the kingdom. * At one time, we find the whole council soliciting the haughty primate in vain, in behalf of clergymen distinguished for learning and piety, whom he had, on some frivolous pretext, expelled from their benefices; † at another, we find them, with as little effect, threatening him with the penalties of the law, which he had greatly exceeded in his severities. ‡ At last, Archbishop Parker rendered himself so obnoxious,

* Life of Parker, p. 461.

† Neal, Vol. I. p. 373.

‡ Letter of the Lords of Council, *ibid.* p. 383.

that the queen found it prudent to allay the popular clamour by stopping short his career ; but this produced very little alteration in the mind of Elizabeth ; for when his successor, the moderate Grindal, refused to enforce some of her injunctions, she did not hesitate, by an extraordinary exertion of her supremacy, to suspend him from his functions, and meditated even to deprive him altogether. Whitgift, the succeeding primate, taught by this example, proceeded to severities which Parker would not have ventured to exercise, nor the queen, in the earlier part of her reign, have countenanced.

The efforts of Cecil, in an individual capacity, were equally unavailing in these days of intolerance. At first, his high office and known influence with the queen overawed the more violent prelates, and he was enabled to deliver several persons from their resentment. But when it became known that the prejudices of her Majesty were too powerful to be counteracted by the united voice of her council, his remonstrances, his threats, his entreaties, in favour of the oppressed non-conformists, were treated with equal neglect. The university of Cambridge, of which he was chancellor, had, much to their honour, made a bold and manly stand in support of freedom of opinion, and he had succeeded in maintaining their privileges against

the attempts of several of the bishops ; * but when that learned body ventured to declare openly against corner-caps and surplices, the indignation of these prelates and the queen became so implacable, that he was obliged to abandon them to the rigorous injunctions of their adversaries. † Even after he had attained the highest office in the state, his solicitations in behalf of persecuted individuals, in whom he was interested, were without effect ; ‡ and his own domestic chaplain, supported by the benchers of the Temple, whose lecturer he also was, could not escape the rigour of the government party. §

Cecil, as well as the other ministers, were sometimes put on the ungrateful task of acting as the organs of the queen's mandates against the non-conformists. Perhaps it might have been more manly to have refused this submission, and have renounced his office rather than his independence ; but he knew, that, out of office, he could yield no protection whatever to the cause which he favoured ; it was his policy to temporise rather than violently resist ; and to procure, by temperate and persevering remonstrances, such partial changes in the measures which he disapproved, as would not

* Letter of the Lords of Council, Neal, Vol. I. p. 195.

† Ibid. 196.

‡ Ibid. 232, 306, 319, 381, &c.

§ Ibid. 390.

have been granted to an avowed and resolute opposition. Yet, at times, the impolitic severities of the prelates induced him to assume a tone of censure and authority, in which he never indulged unless his indignation was greatly roused. Archbishop Whitgift having drawn up a long list of captious articles, which the clergy were either to answer to his satisfaction, or to be suspended, and having proceeded, by means of it, to harass those who were obnoxious to him, Cecil attempted to stop his proceedings by the following letter :—

“ It may please your Grace,

“ I am sorry to trouble you so oft as I do, but I am more troubled myself, not only with many private petitions of sundry ministers, recommended for persons of credit, and peaceable in their ministry, who are greatly troubled by your Grace and your colleagues in commission ; but I am also daily charged by counsellors and public persons, with neglect of my duty, in not staying your Grace’s vehement proceedings against ministers, whereby Papists are greatly encouraged, and the queen’s safety endangered. I have read over your twenty-four articles, found in a Romish style, of great length and curiosity, to examine all manner of ministers in this time, without distinction of persons, to be executed *ex officio mero*. And I find them so, curiously penned, so full of branches and cir-

cumstances, that I think *the inquisition of Spain used not so many questions to comprehend and to trap their priests*. I know your canonists can defend these with all their particles; but surely, under correction, this judicial and canonical sifting poor ministers is not to edify or reform. And, in charity, I think they ought not to answer all these nice points, except they were notorious Papists or heretics. I write with the testimony of a good conscience. I desire the peace and unity of the church. I favour no sensual and wilful recusant; but I conclude, according to my simple judgment, *this kind of proceeding is too much favouring of the Romish inquisition, and is a decree rather to seek for offenders than to reform any*. It is not charitable to send poor ministers to your common register, to answer upon so many articles at one instant, without a copy of the articles or their answers. I pray your Grace bear with this one (perchance) fault, that I have willed the ministers not to answer these articles except their consciences may suffer them."

To this spirited letter the archbishop returned an elaborate reply, in which he defended his proceedings; and Cecil, perceiving that it was in vain to remonstrate, only replied, "That, after reading his Grace's long answer, he was not satisfied in the point of seeking, by examination, to have ministers

accuse themselves, and then punish them for their own confessions; that he would not call his proceedings captious, but they were scarcely charitable." Whitgift rejoined, by sending him other papers in his own justification, and endeavoured to convince him, that if archbishops and bishops should be driven to use proofs *by witnesses only*, the execution of the law would be partial, their charges in procuring and producing witnesses intolerable, and their proceedings altogether too slow and circumscribed for extinguishing the sectaries. *

Cecil was by no means satisfied with these reasonings of the prelate, and therefore united with the rest of the council in sending him a still stronger remonstrance, in which they complained that the most diligent, learned, and zealous pastors were deprived of their livings, for a few points respecting unimportant ceremonies; while the most ignorant and notoriously profligate characters were allowed to retain their cures unmolested, provided they submitted their consciences without reserve to their superiors. That the primate might not plead ignorance of the alleged abuses, the council sent with this letter a list of names in three columns, one of learned and worthy ministers deprived; a second of ignorant and vicious persons continued; and a third of pluralists and non-residents. But

* Strype's Life of Whitgift, p. 160.

these remonstrances, as they were not enforced by the arm of power, served only to exasperate the archbishop; and the same violent measures continued to be pursued with unremitting activity.

The ministers of Elizabeth, besides their unwillingness to occasion internal dissensions, seem to have feared that the exorbitant power entrusted to the superior clergy, for enforcing their forms, might give the Protestants the undue ascendancy possessed by the church of Rome. Sir Francis Knollys, one of the ministers, in a letter to his colleague Cecil, calls some of Whitgift's ordinances *articles of inquisition, highly prejudicial to the royal prerogative.* * And, indeed, there seemed to be reasonable grounds for alarm, since some of the clergy began, after the example of the church of Rome, to give hints of a divine right, which, by a wonderful concatenation, had been transmitted to them from the very days of the Apostles. † On the other hand, it was easy to foresee that the puritans, pushed to extremities, would begin to ques-

* Neal, Vol. I. p. 444.

† These ideas were now promulgated by Bancroft, but Crammer had so fully considered himself as an officer acting by the king's authority, and was so well convinced that his episcopal power ended, like that of the other officers, with the life of the monarch who conferred it, that, on the death of Henry VIII. he refused to exercise any jurisdiction, until he received a new commission from King Edward.

tion that power from which their hardships proceeded ; and, becoming more exasperated against the church, would begin to associate, with their earnest desire for ecclesiastical reformation, an expectation of changes in the government which supported it. But the peculiar circumstances of the times prevented these dispositions, however evident, from leading, during Elizabeth's reign, to any dangerous consequences. The puritans, as well as all other Protestants, fondly looked on her as their refuge against the intolerable cruelty of the Catholics ; and, even when they felt themselves to be the objects of her aversion, they, as well as their brethren in Scotland, entered into associations for the defence of her person and government.

In civil transactions, the moderate and cautious Civil policy of Cecil. maxims of Cecil had a far more conspicuous ascendant. Considering as the happiest condition of a nation, a state of unbroken peace, in which the people might proceed in the improvement of their circumstances by contented industry ; he was the strenuous advocate of every moderate and conciliatory measure. Meriting, above almost all statesmen, the character of a safe politician, his principles of government were salutary at all times, but peculiarly fortunate in the dangerous and delicate period when he lived.

From the commencement of his administration Reformation of the coin. under Elizabeth, he proceeded, as he had done du-

ring the short reign of Edward, in a gradual amelioration of the internal state of the country. One of his first measures was to reinstate the coin of the realm, which had been so much debased during the preceding reigns, as to prove extremely prejudicial to trade both at home and abroad. While the shilling, which, in the first years of Henry the Eighth, contained one hundred and eighteen grains of fine silver, was, in the latter part of his reign, reduced to forty, and, in the reign of Edward, to twenty; the money price of every thing was, by this means, both exorbitantly increased, and rendered extremely uncertain. * In transactions with foreign merchants, and even among the natives themselves, the difference between the real and nominal value of the coin was a source of endless disputes; and the popular discontents which ensued were both loud and general. Some attempts had been made to remedy the evil; but proving abortive, from the scarcity of bullion, and the want of perseverance on the part of government, the prospect of amendment was now deemed almost hopeless. Cecil, however, was strongly impressed with the great advantages which would result from a restoration of the coin; and having been convinced, from a mature consideration which he had given to

* Lowndes's Extract from the Mint, in Locke's Essay on Coin, p. 69.

the subject, even in the reign of Edward, that the preceding failures were the result of mismanagement, he prevailed on Elizabeth to commence the undertaking without delay, and gradually, but resolutely, to proceed as her means would allow. To render the people more eager to bring the base money into the mint, its current value was reduced by proclamation; and new gold and silver coin, of the standard weight and value, being issued in exchange, the money of England, from an excessive debasement, soon became the heaviest and finest in Europe.

But the measures which the state of public af-
 fairs obliged him to pursue were not always so evi-
 dently beneficial, or so generally acceptable. Aware,
 however, that the nation, if convinced that the
 plans of government were for their advantage,
 would concur in them far more certainly than
 from a dread of authority; he was anxious to se-
 cure the public opinion, and procure obedience
 rather by persuasion than command. He advised
 Elizabeth, as the first act of her reign, to summon
 a parliament. Here he introduced his propositions
 for religious reformation, and called on the Catho-
 lics to reply freely to the arguments which he ad-
 vanced. In the succeeding period of the reign,
 however, the bold doctrines of the puritans, and
 the queen's exceeding aversion to any discussion
 which might touch her prerogative, prevented him

His regard
 to public
 opinion.

from employing this channel for the defence of his measures ; yet he seems occasionally to have adopted the practice of bringing political transactions before parliament. There is still preserved a very clear exposition of the designs of Philip II. of Spain, which he delivered on one occasion in the House of Lords, and the heads of which he afterwards transmitted to the speaker for the information of the Commons.*

In the press he found a more constant and effectual method of influencing public opinion. As he never undertook any political measure without due deliberation, he concluded that the same reasons, which weighed with him, would weigh with the nation at large. Though involved in a vast maze of public business, he did not fail to bestow a portion of his time in justifying to the world both the measures of his government, and his own private conduct. Among the salutary effects of his political writings, it is mentioned that they contributed much to retain the people in their allegiance, during the dangerous insurrections which succeeded Norfolk's first conspiracy. There are still extant several of his pieces on that occasion, in which he paints the folly and danger of the rebels, the profligate characters of their ringleaders, and the mi-

* Strype's Annals, Vol. IV. p. 107.

† See Camden, Strype, &c.

series which must inevitably overtake them in the event of defeat.* To the many defamatory libels which the Jesuits published, during his administration, against Elizabeth and her ministers, it was his constant practice to publish replies. He knew too well the impression made by uncontradicted calumnies to let them pass unexposed. Silent contempt, he perceived, might be represented as proceeding from conscious guilt; and to suppress the propagation of slanders by force, would seem to betray both an inability to refute them, and a dread of their effects. He knew that better arguments could always be found in support of truth than of falsehood, and that it was the fault of the reasoner if the cause of right did not appear to the greatest advantage. The great facility of composition, which he had acquired in the earlier period of his life, proved of infinite importance to him in these voluminous apologies.†

To diffuse information among the people, and render them capable of comprehending sound reasoning on public business, was a favourite object with Cecil. In contradiction to the absurd idea that ignorance is the parent of good order, that men will prove the best subjects when they bestow

Care of
public edu-
cation.

* See Camden, Strype, &c.

† Many of them are published in Strype, and many still remain in manuscript.

no thought on their social relations, it was the maxim of this sagacious statesman, "that where the people were well taught, the king had ever good obedience of his subjects." * Considering the church as the grand channel for the moral as well as religious instruction of the people, he earnestly laboured to fill every ecclesiastical office with able, learned, and active teachers. To impress these sentiments on his sovereign, as well as his political colleagues, he warned them that "where there wanted a good ministry, there were ever bad people; for they that knew not how to serve God would never obey the king." †

Financial
plans.

Fortunate had it been for the fame of Cecil, if his accommodating policy, his desire to gratify the queen, without incensing the people, could always have been carried into effect by means equally praise-worthy. But Elizabeth's passion for uncontrolled power sometimes led him into measures, or at least into schemes, which would seem to indicate that his regard to public opinion arose rather from the love of tranquillity, than from concern for the liberties of the nation. Of this description were some plans which he proposed for augmenting the royal revenue, without having recourse to parliament. To this last resource Elizabeth had a peculiar aversion; and, rather than endure the

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 55.

† Ibid.

disquisitions and remonstrances from which the Commons could now with much difficulty be restrained, she was willing to relieve her pressing exigencies by alienating the crown lands, and entailing irremediable embarrassment on her successors. Cecil seems to have been desirous to avert these ruinous alienations, and yet anxious to gratify the queen by procuring supplies independent of the parliament. One scheme for this purpose, which he proposed in a speech to Elizabeth and her council, was to erect a court for the correction of all abuses, invested with a general inquisitorial authority over the whole kingdom, and empowered to punish defaults by fines for the royal exchequer. He urges the queen to the adoption of this measure by the example of her grandfather Henry VII., who by such means greatly augmented his revenue; and recommends that the court, to render its operations more effectual, should proceed "as well by the direction and ordinary course of the laws, as by the virtue of her majesty's supreme regiment and absolute power, from whence law proceeded." From this institution he expected a greater revenue than Henry VIII. derived from the abolition of the abbey, and all the forfeitures of ecclesiastical revenues. * Strange! that a minister who, on other occasions, so wisely regarded

A court of inquiry.

* Strype, Annal. Vol. IV. p. 334.

the popular feeling, should propose a scheme which must have revived the odious extortions of Empson and Dudley. Refined speculations on the motives of men are almost always false, or we might be induced to suppose that Cecil, on this occasion, was desirous to turn the attention of the queen from more practicable methods of procuring illegal supplies, by directing it to schemes which could never be executed.

A general
loan.

Another financial suggestion of his was entitled to approbation, if we make due allowance for the abuses and ignorance of the age. Although it was the acknowledged prerogative of the Commons, that no tax should be levied on the people without their consent, yet the kings of England had found various means to elude this right. Of these, one of the most successful was to levy money under the name of a benevolence, or voluntary loan, which, however, scarcely differed in any thing from a tax. Its amount was regulated by the government, and those from whom it was demanded were obliged to comply: the lenders received no interest while it remained in the hands of the public; and the principal, if ever returned, was usually detained till a very distant period.* Yet such

* The methods practised in levying these forced voluntary loans are developed in a curious paper of instructions from the council of Henry VIII. to the commissioners for the county of Derby, in-

was the effect of a name, that people acquiesced patiently in this abuse ; and the same Commons who would have taken fire at an attempt to levy a subsidy by the monarch's sole authority, were brought to countenance his no less oppressive borrowing. As the benevolences were imposed at the discretion of the officers of government, who had also a power to accept what they chose to account a reasonable excuse ; they were levied in the most partial and injurious manner. Some individuals were reduced to ruin by these exactions, while others, of equal property, were allowed to escape them altogether. Cecil, to render this practice less unfair in itself, and less severe on individuals, hazarded a proposition to raise a general loan on the people, equivalent in amount to a subsidy, and imposed according to the same proportions.*

It was with a more successful issue, and much Frugality.

serted in Lodge's Illustrations, Vol. I. p. 71. The commissioners are here enjoined to employ every art that may work upon the hopes or fears of the person applied to ; and if, after all, he obstinately refuses to comply, they are then ordered to swear him to secrecy in regard to what has passed, that his example may not influence others. But occasionally, much more severe measures were resorted to against the refractory ; and from a document in the same collection, (Vol. I. p. 82,) we find Richard Reed, an alderman of London, who refused to contribute, forcibly carried off, by the king's order, to serve as a common soldier !

* Haynes, p. 319.

- happier example, that he strenuously recommended a rigid frugality as the only effectual means of carrying on the government, without compromising its authority, or engendering public discontents. Elizabeth had the prudence to coincide with these economical views; and she has hence deservedly acquired the reputation of husbanding her resources with the utmost skill, and making very few demands on the property of her people. Although surrounded by powerful enemies, engaged in frequent wars, obliged to disburse large sums for the support of her friends abroad, and the suppression of dangerous enterprises at home, she conducted her government at less expence, in proportion to her undertakings, than any sovereign in our history. The large debts contracted by her father and sister, with which she found the crown encumbered at her accession, amounted, it is said, to four millions, an enormous sum in that age :*
- yet these she quickly discharged, and, at her death, could rank her most potent allies among her debtors. The States of Holland owed her eight hundred thousand pounds, and the King of France four hundred and fifty thousand. †

From this strict economy, of which Cecil never lost sight, there resulted the most important advantages. As the people were not harassed with

* D'Ewes, p. 473.

† Winwood, Vol. I. p. 29, 54.

exactions, the government of Elizabeth was extremely popular, at a period when the dangerous machinations of her enemies, both at home and abroad, rendered popularity indispensable to her safety. Without illegal extortions, or contests with her parliament, she was enabled to maintain her independence, and to avoid concessions to which her haughty spirit could not submit. She was even able occasionally to acquire the praise of disinterestedness and generosity, by refusing the grants of money which were offered to her by the legislature without solicitation. By this management she so completely acquired the confidence of her subjects, that the Commons, though in these days extremely tenacious of their money, voted her, without reluctance, and without annexing any conditions, much larger sums than had been granted to her predecessors. They knew that their treasures were never misapplied ; that nothing was expended which could possibly be saved ; and the unavoidable exigencies of the state were always acknowledged by the nation before the government had recourse to parliament for supplies. When we consider the temper and conduct of Elizabeth, we cannot but attribute the tranquillity of her reign, in a great measure, to this rigid frugality. Scarcely less haughty and impatient of contradiction than her father, her pretensions to absolute authority were at times even more lofty, and her

usual language to her parliaments still less gracious. As the Commons, however compliant in other respects, were ever ready to encounter danger, rather than surrender the public money without evident utility, or a valuable consideration, it can scarcely be doubted, that, if she had been led into embarrassments by prodigality, their resolute demands for concessions on the one hand, and her obstinate refusal to abridge her power on the other, would have terminated in civil convulsions.

In the intercourse of England with foreign nations, this economy in the management of public money was replete with equal advantage. The allies, whom it was most essential for Elizabeth to support, were often reduced to such straits for money, that the dispersion of their forces, and the utter ruin of their hopes, seemed inevitable. In these critical emergencies, she found means, either from her exchequer or her credit, to afford them a supply ; and its seasonableness gave it an efficacy beyond its magnitude. But though she relieved them opportunely, she wasted none of her resources without the most evident necessity. Her policy was never to afford them any supplies of men and money, until she found that they could not otherwise defend themselves ; to send them at length succours just sufficient to retrieve their circumstances ; and to withdraw her forces as soon as the most imminent danger was repelled. She was li-

beral only when her allies were much depressed, and it was necessary to revive their drooping spirits ; at other times, she required that the money which she advanced should be repaid, and even that the expences of her armaments should be reimbursed. Most of her pecuniary assistance to Henry IV. of France was given in the form of loans ; and the Dutch were obliged to put into her hands several fortified towns as security for the repayment of her advances. She thus enabled her allies to retrieve their affairs, and provided that the expenditure, of which they were to reap the chief benefit, should not become a burden to her subjects.

The frugality of Elizabeth did not escape censure ; and Cecil, by whose counsels it was known to be enforced, was often reproached with sacrificing the best allies of England to his little-minded and parsimonious policy. But events fully justified his sagacity. While our allies were raised to the most vigorous exertion, and finally triumphed over their enemies, England herself, the main spring of these efforts, advanced in a progressive course of prosperity.

But it was the very sparing hand with which he distributed the public money at home, that excited ^{Opposition to grants to courtiers.} against him the loudest clamours. In those days, it was customary for men of rank to waste their property in attendance at court, and in an idle

emulation of splendour, while they looked to the bounty of the sovereign for repairing their ruined fortunes. To the importunities of this train, who perpetually beset the court, and yet could urge no other claim than their own profusion, Cecil was inexorable. They complained that he not only refused to exert his interest in their behalf, but even hardened the queen against their solicitations.* Elizabeth, indeed, had no inclination to be prodigal of her treasures, unless when her individual predilections occasionally overcame her general parsimony. Her partial regard to the Earl of Essex seems particularly to have moved her liberality; for we find, that, on his departure for the government of Ireland, she made him a present of thirty thousand pounds; † and Cecil, who watched these instances of profusion with a jealous eye, computed, that, from first to last, her pecuniary gifts to the Earl amounted to three hundred thousand pounds: ‡—a lavish bounty, while the annual ordinary revenues of the state did not exceed five hundred thousand.

Elizabeth, anxious to avoid dependence on her

* “Madam,” he was accustomed to say, “you do well to let suitors stay, for I shall tell you *his dat qui cito dat*; if you grant them speedily, they will come again the sooner.” Bacon’s Works; Vol. III. p. 264.

† Birch’s Memoirs, Vol. II.

‡ Nanton’s Regalia, chap. i.

parliament, was too often persuaded to reward her courtiers with grants prejudicial to the national prosperity. Sometimes she yielded them exemptions from the penalties of the laws, sometimes she indulged them in the suppression of prosecutions; and still more frequently, she enriched them by monopolies of articles in general use. Against these abuses, which he justly termed the cankers of the commonwealth, * Cecil continually remonstrated, but too often in vain. Towards the latter end of the reign, however, the evil became so enormous as to compel a remedy; for the Commons, perceiving the commerce of the nation hastening to ruin under the pressure of monopolies, became so vehement in their complaints, that Elizabeth felt the necessity of abolishing the most obnoxious.

But while Cecil was the avowed enemy of all grants to idle suitors, he anxiously desired that those who performed real services should enjoy a liberal provision. It was by his salutary regulations that the common soldiers were first clothed at the expence of government, and received their weekly allowance directly into their own hands. † According to the previous practice, the whole pay of the corps was consigned into the hands of the superior officers, who were so little restricted, either

His improvement of the condition of the soldiers.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 62.

† Ibid. p. 47.

as to the time or the amount of their distributions, that the unfortunate soldiers were sometimes absolutely left to starve. The reformation of these abuses occasioned many murmurs among those whom it deprived of their unjust gains ; but it infused new loyalty and vigour into the English army, at a period when foreign invasion, assisted by many internal enemies, threatened to involve the country in ruin. From a general adherence to this system, of being liberal to the servants of the public, and very parsimonious to the dependents of the court, it became a common saying, that “ the queen paid liberally, though she rewarded sparingly.”

His management of the revenue.

Cecil was raised to the office of Lord High Treasurer in the eleventh year of his administration. In this high station, while he punished with severity all oppression in the collection of the revenue, he gave strict orders that no one should be allowed to escape from his just proportion of the public taxes. All undue lenity of this sort to one individual, he considered a direct injustice to another : since the deficiency must have been made up by new exactions on the more honourable contributors. From this strict impartiality, and from his improved arrangements, the receipts of the treasury, from the same sources, experienced a great amelioration. The abuse, which then prevailed, of ministers retaining in their hands, and receiving interest on considerable sums of the pub-

lic money, he endeavoured to check by never issuing the smallest payment without an express warrant from the queen. Of the purity which he required in others, he himself set an example; for he never imitated the usual practice of other treasurers, in occasionally borrowing from the exchequer for private purposes; and he was almost the only one of Elizabeth's ministers who, at his death, owed nothing to the public. This strict attention to the interests of the exchequer is the more commendable, as it proceeded from a desire to diminish the burdens of the people. So averse was he to all new impositions on the subjects, that he would never allow the tenants of the crown-lands to be harassed by a rise of rents, or turned out to make room for higher bidders; and it was his excellent saying, "that he never cared to see the treasury swell like a disordered spleen, when the other parts of the constitution were in a consumption." *

From the same considerations with his love of economy arose his steady attachment to pacific measures. Instructed both by history and by observation, that war was the great means of wasting the resources of nations, he firmly resisted the efforts of those rash and ambitious spirits, who perpetually endeavoured to plunge the nation into hostilities, with the view of advancing their own

Attachment
to peace.

* Camden, Annal. Eliz. Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 53.

reputation and fortunes. He had ever on his lips the salutary maxims, "that war is soon kindled, but peace very hardly procured; that war is the curse, and peace the blessing of God upon a nation; and that a realm gains more by one year's peace than by ten years' war." * By these pacific counsels, the queen, from the soundness of her understanding, and her aversion to expence, was usually swayed. On a few occasions, a longing for military glory, or a leaning to some favourite counsellors, who were men of more ambition than discretion, caused her to disregard the dissuasions of Cecil; but more serious reflection seldom failed to dispel her illusion.

The wisdom of Cecil, in adhering resolutely to a pacific system, deserves the more applause, as the condition of Europe, at that period, was calculated to tempt an English minister into extensive wars. While Scotland and France were torn by intestine convulsions, and the rebels often enabled to overpower the sovereign, the Low Countries, which had revolted against Philip, seemed determined to endure the last extremities rather than again submit to his dominion. England alone enjoyed internal tranquillity; and, by uniting with the insurgents of either country, might have acquired both a large addition of territory, and such other conces-

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 70.

sions as may be wrested from a weaker power. But Cecil well knew that conquests were not the true road to national aggrandisement ; and that his country would suffer more in her resources and real strength, from an extensive and protracted war, than she could gain from its most successful results.

Yet, though the strenuous advocate of a pacific policy, his forbearance did not arise from timidity, nor his parsimony from a contracted mind. Against the dangers which threatened the kingdom, he prepared with firmness and activity ; and when the public interests required it, he could advise a large expenditure and extensive armaments. When the prospect of the Spanish invasion filled the nation with just alarm, he drew up plans of defence ; and, by his serene and collected demeanour, seconded his courageous mistress in diffusing general confidence and intrepidity. * His conduct with respect to the allies and enemies of his country forms so important a part of his transactions, and exhibits a system of foreign policy so much more extensive and refined than had hitherto been acted upon in England, as to demand a more particular examination.

From the early part of the sixteenth century, ^{Foreign po-} the political transactions of Europe had gradually ^{licy.}

* Camden, Annal. Eliz. p. 582.

been assuming a more systematic form ; and a sort of balance of power was at length established among the principal nations. Henry VIII. boasted of holding this balance ; but he held it with so unsteady a hand, and his measures were so much the result of momentary passion, that his influence in foreign transactions was far from adequate to his comparative power. During the reign of Edward VI. England was prevented, by her internal factions, from giving much attention to external affairs ; and, by the marriage of Mary with Philip, was sunk for a time into little else than a province of the overgrown Spanish monarchy. But under Elizabeth, various circumstances occurred to alter the aspect of affairs ; and England, from the wisdom with which her government availed itself of her advantages, obtained an extraordinary ascendancy in the public transactions of Europe.

Of these circumstances the most important arose from the general change which, at this period, was taking place in religious sentiments. The commencement of the Reformation has been noticed in the life of Sir Thomas More, and since that time the new principles had spread through almost every country of Europe. The Roman hierarchy attempted to extinguish them by the aid of secular authority ; but the reformers, after suffering incredible oppressions, began to defend their freedom of opinion by force of arms. Elizabeth, the great-

est sovereign of Europe who had embraced the new faith, was, from her situation, placed at the head of the Protestant cause. Exposed thus to the inveterate resentment of the Catholics, her protection was relied on by the reformed with the more confidence, as they knew the adherents of the pope to be no less her enemies than their own. The foreign policy of Cecil was adapted to this state of things. He knew that the English Catholics, who still formed a powerful body in the nation, were secretly encouraged, and urged to dangerous insurrections, by the foreign princes of their persuasion. He also knew that these princes were eager to seize an opportunity of uniting their forces to wrest the sceptre from Elizabeth; and that they had already begun to form extensive leagues for that purpose. The most effectual means to avert these dangers was, he concluded, to support the Protestants in their opposition to their Catholic sovereigns, who would thus be sufficiently occupied at home, and have neither the leisure nor the power to turn their arms against England.

We are first to consider the application of this plan of policy to the Spanish empire. Philip, at that time the most wealthy and powerful monarch of Europe, was actuated both by inordinate ambition, and by a gloomy and unrelenting bigotry. By standing forth as the champion of Rome, and labouring to exterminate the Protestants by fire

Policy to-
wards Spain
and the
Low Coun-
tries.

and sword, he expected to acquire such a body of adherents in every country of Europe, as might pave his way to universal dominion. To a prince with such views, Elizabeth, who stood at the head of the Protestant interest, was necessarily the most marked object of enmity : yet there were circumstances which induced him, in the first period of her reign, to postpone his hostile schemes, and even to appear as her supporter. At first, he entertained hopes, by gaining her hand, to effect the darling plan, which his union with her sister had failed to realise, of attaching England to the Spanish monarchy. Even after this hope was gone, the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots with Francis the Second, which threatened, if Elizabeth should be overwhelmed by her enemies, to reduce England as well as Scotland under the dominion of France, rendered him desirous to support her against their attempts. But when freed from these apprehensions by the death of Francis, he began to put in practice the enterprises suggested by his schemes of aggrandisement. He still wore the mask of friendship, but he was from that time forward wholly occupied with the extirpation of heresy, and with projects to deprive its great protectress of her throne and her life.

Cecil was, from the first, aware of the real disposition and views of Philip. He perceived that if, by any contingency, the circumstances

which rendered a show of friendship towards Elizabeth subservient to that prince's interest should be removed, she would have every thing to dread from his ambition and bigotry. Yet even after the course of events had rendered this dissimulation unnecessary, and the King of Spain had begun to throw off the mask, the prudent minister of England still advised his mistress to temporise, and, as long as possible, to avoid open hostilities; when her power should be more firmly established, her finances improved, and her forces augmented, then, he showed her, would be the proper period to undertake the contest: in the mean time, it was her policy to dissemble her resentment at the faithlessness of Philip, to meet his advances as if she believed them sincere, and to send an embassy into Spain to settle, by negotiation, any occasional quarrels that might arise. *

These cautious suggestions of Cecil, which the queen had the wisdom to follow, were loudly declaimed against by his political rivals, as resulting from a weak and timid disposition, calculated to compromise the glory of his country, and to degrade its government in the eyes of foreigners. The aids in men, money, and ammunition, which, at the same period, he counselled to be sent to the French Protestants, excited reproaches no less im-

* Camden, p. 70.

portunate, but of an opposite nature ; for he, who had just been branded as weak and timid, was now accused of rashness and a disregard to the public safety. Such is the justice of faction !

1568. In pursuance of his ambitious projects, Philip had resolved to deprive his subjects in the Low Countries of their ancient privileges, to bring them completely under the yoke of despotism, and at the same time to extirpate that heresy which, in conjunction with the principles of civil liberty, had already begun to flourish among them. For this purpose he sent thither a body of veteran Spaniards, commanded by the Duke of Alva, an experienced officer, but a gloomy bigot, in whose bosom long habits of tyranny seemed to have extinguished every feeling of humanity. His arrival in the Netherlands was marked by the most wanton barbarities. Confiscation, imprisonment, and exile, were accounted mild punishments ; few, who had once the misfortune to become objects of suspicion, escaped torture or death ; and the victims, whom malice pointed out to the jealous instruments of the tyrant, were often, without any form of accusation or trial, committed to the flames. Such was the barbarity of this man, that, besides the slaughters perpetrated by his soldiers, he boasted, with a savage joy, on leaving the Netherlands, that, during his government there, he had delivered eighteen

thousand of these obstinate heretics into the hands of the executioner. *

The unfortunate Flemings, quitting their native country in crowds, fled to England, the only state in Europe where they could depend on effectual protection ; and Elizabeth, cordially receiving them, was enabled, with their assistance, to enrich her dominions by several valuable manufactures, which had hitherto been chiefly confined to the Netherlands. Nor was it long till an opportunity occurred of rendering an indirect assistance to their miserable country. Philip, having contracted with some Genoese merchants to transport into Flanders a sum of four hundred thousand crowns, for the use of his troops, who were almost in a state of mutiny from the want of pay ; the vessels, on board of which this treasure was conveyed, happening to be attacked in the Channel by some privateers belonging to the French Hugonots, took refuge in the ports of Plymouth and Southampton. Here it was given out, both by the captains of the vessels and the Spanish ambassador, that their cargoes were the property of the King of Spain ; but Cecil, who had always the best means of procuring intelligence, found out that the money, in fact, did not belong to Philip, that the Genoese merchants had not yet fulfilled their contract, and were, in conse-

* Grotius, lib. ii.

quence, the proprietors of the treasure. On this discovery, he entreated the queen not to neglect so favourable an opportunity of striking a decisive blow against the Spanish power in Flanders. By taking the money as a loan, and by giving security for its repayment, he argued that she might satisfy the Genoese ; while the measure would effectually wound the interests of Spain, without any direct hostility. With this advice Elizabeth complied, and the event demonstrated its sagacity. While the Duke of Alva, thrown into the greatest embarrassment by the loss of his expected supplies, was obliged, to prevent an immediate mutiny among his troops, to make the most severe exactions from the inhabitants ; the tyrannical manner in which they were levied, stretched the patience of the people to the utmost, and prepared their minds for the most desperate resistance. *

This transaction, which produced irreparable evils to the Spanish power in the Low Countries, gave rise to some temporary hostilities between Spain and England. The Duke of Alva seized the persons and goods of the English merchants in the Netherlands, and Elizabeth retaliated on the merchants of Flanders and Spain. But as Philip had not yet matured his schemes for taking effectual

* Camden, *Annal. Eliz.* Nanton's *Fragmenta Regalia*. Bentivoglio, part i. lib. v.

vengeance on England, and as his antagonist did not consider the time arrived for a final rupture with him, these differences were settled by negotiation, and the merchants on both sides indemnified. Elizabeth even yielded so far to the remonstrances of Philip, as to refuse the Flemish refugees admittance for the future into her dominions; but this act of complaisance was followed by very unexpected consequences. These sufferers, finding no place of refuge from their enemies, returned, in despair, to their own coasts, seized the seaport of the Brille; and, being soon joined by crowds of their persecuted countrymen, reared the standard of revolt throughout Holland and Zealand. A solemn league between these two provinces, never again to submit to the tyranny of Spain, now laid the cornerstone of Dutch independence. The stand which the talents of their general, the Prince of Orange, united with their own desperate valour, enabled them to make against this mighty monarchy, far exceeded the general expectation. It was not till after a long siege and great loss that the Duke of Alva succeeded in taking Haarlem; and he was finally compelled to abandon his attempts on Alkmaer. The duke was recalled, but the veteran forces of Spain, supported by her great resources, still pressed severely on the Hollanders, who seemed about to sink under the unequal contest. In this emergency, their eyes were turned to their only remain-

1572.

ing hope ; an embassy, which they had sent to Elizabeth, imploring her protection, and offering her in return the immediate possession and sovereignty of their country.

1575.

A valuable accession of maritime territory, as well as an opportunity of immediately enfeebling her capital enemy, presented very powerful temptations. But many weighty objections naturally occurred to her sagacious counsellors. It was apparent that, to accept the proffered sovereignty, would involve her in immediate hostilities with Philip ; that he would be enabled to throw on her the reproach of aggression and injustice ; that, as these provinces had applied to her merely from the insufficiency of their own resources, it was probable that she would have to sustain the great burden of the contest ; that, from the exhausted state in which, even if ultimately successful, they would naturally be left by the war, their revenues could not speedily repair the waste of her resources which their defence must occasion ; but that, as against the immense power of Philip their success was very doubtful, a present and certain loss would be incurred for distant and precarious advantages. Nor were the more remote evils less to be apprehended, since the possession of a continental territory would necessarily involve England in many disputes and wars, from which her insular situation seemed designed to exempt her. The influence of these

considerations on the mind of Elizabeth was greatly increased by her unwillingness to abet subjects in resistance to their monarch. Her ideas of sovereign power were, indeed, scarcely less lofty than those of Philip; and the depression of a dangerous enemy seemed too dearly purchased by an example of successful rebellion. She refused the proffered sovereignty, but she endeavoured to soften the disappointment to the provinces, by promising to mediate between them and Philip.

Her attempts at conciliation were, as might have been foreseen, ineffectual; but the circumstances of the Hollanders soon afterwards experienced an alteration, which justified a corresponding change in the policy of England. The other provinces of the Netherlands, abused beyond endurance by the horrible excesses of the Spanish troops, had, with the single exception of Luxembourg, risen in arms, and formed a common league to resist foreign tyranny. The strength of the confederacy was now sufficient to give it a fair prospect of success, and the English government resolved to assist the provinces without delay. A sum of money was sent over for the immediate payment of their troops; and a treaty of mutual defence afterwards concluded with them, on the prudential and frugal system which Cecil continually enforced. The queen stipulated to assist the Hollanders with five thousand foot and a thousand horse; but this reinforcement

was to be at their charge ; to lend them a hundred thousand pounds ; but to receive, in return, the bond of several towns in the Low Countries for its repayment, within the year. It was also agreed that, in the event of her being attacked, the provinces should assist her with a force equal to that which she now sent for their protection ; that all quarrels among themselves should be referred to her arbitration ; that her general should sit as a member in the council of the States, and should be made acquainted with all deliberations concerning peace and war. * By this treaty the queen raised the courage of the United Provinces at a critical juncture, effectually weakened her capital enemy, and avoided any considerable waste of her own resources.

But the independence of this noble republic was not to be accomplished without a new succession of difficulties and dangers. By the uncommon talents of the Prince of Parma, who now commanded against the States, and the assassination of their illustrious leader the Prince of Orange, they were again reduced to the most desperate condition. Again they sent a solemn embassy to implore the assistance of Elizabeth, and again proffered their sovereignty as the price of protection. The reasons, which formerly induced her to decline this

* Camden, Annal. Eliz. p. 507.

offer, still led her to the same determination ; but, as the enmity of Philip was daily becoming more apparent, and the success of the States more essential to her security, it was her evident policy to render them more effectual assistance. In a new treaty, she agreed to aid them with an army of five thousand foot, and one thousand horse, to be paid by herself during the war : but, not forgetting the maxims of prudence amidst her liberality, she stipulated that the whole of her expences should be repaid after the conclusion of hostilities ; that the castle of Rammekens, with Flushing and the Brille, should, in the meantime, be placed in her hands as security ; that her general, and two others of her appointment, should be admitted into the council of the States ; and that neither of the contracting parties should make a separate peace. The reinforcements stipulated by this treaty were speedily sent over under the command of the Earl of Leicester. * The appointment of this incapable and arrogant officer is said to have been the only step, in the transactions relative to the Low Countries, that was taken in opposition to the counsels of Cecil. † It was also the only circumstance that led to unprosperous events, and impaired the efficacy of the English succours.

1585.

* Camden, Annal. Eliz. p. 508.

† Leicester's Commonwealth, p. 105.

Although the United Provinces, in their struggle for freedom, encountered many disasters, still their persevering courage, aided by some favourable incidents, gradually began to gain on their enemies. From a habit of successful resistance, they learned to look on the power of Spain, and the chances of war, with less apprehension; the active spirit excited among them began to display itself in commercial enterprises, which quickly augmented their resources. A powerful diversion was also produced in their favour by Henry the Fourth of France, who, after having subdued his internal enemies, now began to retaliate the many hostile acts of Philip in the days of his adversity. Perceiving this favourable change in the circumstances of the States, which rendered them in less immediate want of assistance from England, Cecil, always averse to waste the blood and treasure of the nation in superfluous efforts, began to remind the queen that it was now time to diminish her disbursements in behalf of her allies. To this suggestion she readily hearkened; and, that the limitation of her intended retrenchments might appear a favour, she desired her ambassador to demand the immediate repayment of all her loans and expences. Against this unexpected requisition, with which they were wholly unable to comply, the States, in much consternation, remonstrated; and, after many supplications, prevailed on the queen to be satisfied with more

1505.

moderate conditions. By a new treaty, they engaged to relieve her immediately from the expence of their English auxiliaries ; to pay her annually a small part of their debt ; to assist her, in case it should be requisite, with a stipulated number of ships ; to conclude peace only with her concurrence ; and, in lieu of all her demands against them, to pay her, after the conclusion of peace with Spain, an annual sum of one hundred thousand pounds for four years. Until all these conditions should be fulfilled, the cautionary towns were to remain in her hands. On her part, it was merely stipulated that she should assist them, during the war, with a body of four thousand English auxiliaries, which, however, were to be paid by the States. *

Before the termination of his political career, Cecil had the satisfaction to conclude another treaty, in which still more favourable conditions were procured for England. The States agreed to fix the amount of their debt at eight hundred thousand pounds ; to pay one half of this sum during the war, at the rate of thirty thousand pounds a year ; to assist Elizabeth with a fleet equal to her own, if a convenient opportunity should occur of attacking Spain by sea ; and to send a force of five thousand foot and five hundred horse to her defence, if

* Camden, Annal. Eliz. p. 586.

either England, or Jersey, or Scilly, or the Isle of Wight, should be invaded by the Spaniards. They farther agreed, that, so long as England should continue the war with Spain, they should pay the garrisons of the cautionary towns ; a stipulation by which this country was at once freed from an annual charge of a hundred and twenty thousand pounds. *

War with
Spain.

1588.

The first avowed assistance which England rendered to the United Provinces was the signal for open hostilities with Spain ; and Philip, to gratify at once his revenge and ambition, attempted, by means of his famous Armada, to achieve the entire conquest of England. But as the failure of this immense armament, and various successful attacks on the fleets and harbours of Spain, gave the English a superiority at sea, Philip, finding his losses increase as his hopes diminished, showed a disposition to make peace on reasonable terms. This favourable opportunity of entering into negotiation, Cecil now strongly urged the queen to seize ; for although the war continued to be very successful, and very honourable, yet he felt the wounds which it inflicted under every appearance of advantage. By their captures from the Spaniards, a few individuals were enriched ; and Elizabeth generally took care to have her full share in

* Rymer's *Fœdera*, Vol. XVI. p. 340.

these successful adventures : still the royal treasury was exhausted by the expences of the war, and the reluctant queen frequently forced to replenish it by applying to parliament.

The war, however, was continued, because it offered temptations which neither the queen nor the people were able to resist. The scarcity of the precious metals rendered their value in these days extravagant ; and the rich freights transported from the New World to Spain presented the most powerful excitement to avarice. Stimulated by these, Sir Francis Drake had, even before the commencement of open hostilities with Spain, begun his depredations on her commerce ; and by the treasures which he brought home, as well as the accounts which he circulated, inflamed the avidity of his countrymen. Against these piratical acts the Spaniards vehemently remonstrated ; but Elizabeth accepted of an entertainment and a handsome present from Drake, and gave the Spanish ambassador very little satisfaction. Encouraged by the countenance of their sovereign, and at length authorized by an open declaration of war, English privateers swarmed around the Spanish coast, both in Europe and America. These enterprises became the usual adventure of the times, by which the rich expected to increase their wealth, and the prodigal to repair their fortunes. In the event of a rich prize, Elizabeth was not forgotten ;

nor did she ever refuse to gratify the captors by graciously accepting their presents. These exploits were usually undertaken in partnership, and a vessel or two were sometimes furnished by her majesty ; a speculation which seldom failed to turn to the benefit of the treasury, as the queen's portion of the booty, by means of duties, presents, and various other allowances, generally proved much greater than her share in the equipment. An adventure of Sir Walter Raleigh having proved very successful, that experienced courtier humbly entreated the queen, who had borne a tenth part in the expence, to accept one half of the booty, in lieu of all demands. In these enterprises many, indeed, lost both their fortunes and their lives ; but the successful adventurers alone attracted the public notice, and this lottery continued to prove irresistibly tempting.

It is probable that Cecil, who attended so much to the progress of national industry and wealth, perceived many bad consequences from this mode of warfare. The attention of the nation was withdrawn from manufactures and commerce ; the capital and enterprise, which would otherwise have remained to the useful arts, were wasted on schemes of hazard. The people, neglecting those employments from which alone solid and general opulence can be derived, were in danger of acquiring the habits and calculations of pirates. But there were

other and more generous passions which rendered the court and the people unwilling to hearken to the representations of Cecil. Although Spain was at that time the most powerful nation in Europe, the English, with vessels far inferior, had harassed her mightiest fleet, captured her richest convoys, and even burnt her ships in her principal harbours. These successes, obtained by courage and skill over a haughty enemy, greatly elevated the spirits of our countrymen ; and the glory of the English arms became a triumphant theme in every mouth. To pursue this gallant course, to follow up these blows by new achievements, to lay the pride of Spain prostrate at their feet, were the expressions which resounded throughout the nation.

Into these sentiments Elizabeth cordially entered ; for, with all the soundness of her understanding, love of fame was a predominant passion in her breast, and nothing could exceed her desire of being admired, whether for the imagined charms of her person, or the heroic exploits of her subjects. In the present question, the influence of vanity was confirmed by a more tender sentiment. The young Earl of Essex had now succeeded to that place in her affections, which had formerly been held by the Earl of Leicester. No quality which could captivate seemed to be wanting in this young nobleman. A person uncommonly handsome derived new graces from manners easy,

Earl of Essex.

frank, and popular ; and such was the ascendancy of these external advantages, united to a nature liberal and ardent, that he had the rare fortune of being no less the idol of the people than the favourite of the sovereign. Yet these shining qualities were accompanied by defects, which rendered him particularly unfit for the management of public affairs. Impatient, passionate, and wilful, he was so jealous of his honour, as to be inflamed by even an imaginary insult ; so greedy of fame, that every successful rival appeared an enemy ; so fond of military glory, that no considerations of policy could restrain him from precipitating his country into a war where he might earn distinction ; and yet so unfit, from imprudence and heat, for conducting military operations, that no enterprise could safely be trusted to his hands. He had acquired some reputation in the Spanish war, and eagerly panted for more ; he stood forward, therefore, as the vehement opposer of Cecil's propositions for peace ; and his influence over the queen's affections, joined to the other considerations which we have mentioned, was sufficient to counteract the intentions of the minister.

Cecil was no less interested for the glory of his country than Essex ; but while he felt how much security depends on political reputation, he perceived the folly of attempting to render a nation glorious by wasting her resources, or great by re-

ducing her to imbecility. He knew, that, with the substance, the shadow must disappear; that if the resources of an empire are exhausted, the reputation founded on them must soon vanish. Averse to the waste of public property, and detesting the wanton effusion of human blood, he could not, without indignation, see both sovereign and people led away by the same passions as Essex, and surrendering the reins of their understandings to the delusions of a heated brain. On one occasion, when the question of peace and war was debated in council, Essex proceeded, as usual, to declaim in favour of continuing hostilities, urging that the Spaniards, being a subtle people, ambitious of extending their dominion, implacable enemies to England, bigoted adherents of the Pope, and professing that no faith was to be observed with heretics, were incapable of maintaining the relations of peace. Cecil, who felt that, if such arguments prevailed, the sword would never be sheathed, could not help indignantly exclaiming, in the midst of this harangue, "that the speaker seemed intent on nothing but blood and slaughter." At the close of the debate, perceiving that his reasoning was of no avail against the impulses of passion, he pulled out a common prayer-book from his pocket, and pointed in silence to the words, "Men of blood shall not live half their

days." * He felt that time and experience could alone dispel the delusion ; still he endeavoured to accelerate that desirable event, by the publication of a tract, containing his arguments for peace ; these, though disregarded by the multitude, were too distinct and forcible not to impress the reflecting and moderate. †

Policy to-
wards
France.

In the policy pursued by England towards France, as the passions of men were less interested, the councils of Cecil were followed, with little deviation. During the short and feeble reign of Francis II. the Duke of Guise, with his four brothers, uncles to Mary Queen of Scots, had obtained a complete ascendancy in the French government. Powerful from the influence of their house, and dignified by their alliance with the royal family, their talents, joined to a restless, daring ambition, overpowered their antagonists, and reduced their monarch to a mere instrument in their hands. The recapture of Calais from England, which the duke had unexpectedly effected, procured him unrivalled popularity ; while his standing forth as the leader of the Catholics against the Hugonots, gave him unlimited sway over the most numerous portion of the people. As the champion of his faith, he prepared to enforce its adoption with fire and sword, and to exterminate Protestant-

* Camden, p. 608. † Ibid.

ism throughout France. The leaders of the Hugonots flew to arms ; but, from their inadequate resources, they were quickly reduced to extremities, and, in despair, applied to Elizabeth for succour. Her compliance was enforced by the most evident interest, as the ambitious Guise aspired to place his niece Mary on the throne of England as well as of Scotland. A supply of men and money was accordingly sent without delay.

Throughout all the measures of Elizabeth towards the French Hugonots, we perceive the cautious and frugal policy of Cecil. He was of opinion that the French Protestants should, from time to time, be furnished with such supplies as might enable them to make head against their enemies ; but that it would be folly to embroil his country farther than this object required. France and England had long regarded each other as dangerous rivals ; and he understood human nature too well, to suppose that a change of religion in the government would alter these sentiments. A French sovereign, whether Popish or Protestant, would, he knew, be almost equally dangerous to England ; and he deemed it extreme folly in this country to waste her resources in procuring a decided ascendancy to either the insurgent or the royalist faction.

Such were the maxims which guided the conduct of Elizabeth during the French civil wars,

When the Hugonots were almost driven to despair in the minority of Charles IX. she furnished them with some money and troops; but a part of the money was advanced by way of loan; and, in return, she obliged her allies to put Havre de Grace into her hands, as a pledge that Calais should be restored to the English crown. When the young Duke of Guise, at a subsequent period, had begun to emulate the enterprises of his father; and had reduced the Protestants to extreme distress, she again revived their spirits by timely assistance; but it consisted merely in exciting the Protestant German princes to their support; in lending them a sum of money, for which the jewels of the Queen of Navarre were deposited with her in pledge; and in permitting a hundred gentlemen volunteers to pass over into France, where they fought at their own charge.*

The massacre of St Bartholomew, in which the court of France butchered such multitudes of their unsuspecting Protestant subjects, naturally excited the horror of all the Protestant states of Europe. The English, fired with indignation, eagerly expected to see their government stand forward to avenge the rights of religion and humanity; and so earnest were the nobility and gentry in the cause, that they offered to levy an army of twenty

* Camden, p. 423.

thousand foot and ten thousand horse, to transport them to France, and maintain them at their own expence.* But Elizabeth, instructed by her wise counsellors, perceived too well the consequences of such a crusade, to second the hasty resentment of her subjects. She was aware that an attack on France, to be effectual, would require such a waste of resources as must enfeeble the nation, and render abortive all the frugal measures of her reign; that Charles and Philip, from a similarity of malignant passions, had formed a close union; that, against such a combination, the success of her utmost efforts in behalf of the French Protestants was, at best, very doubtful; that the only certain effect of an attack on France would be to exasperate that nation, and exhaust her own; and thus render Charles and Philip both more eager and more able to accomplish her destruction. But while she prudently dissembled her indignation, till a more favourable opportunity, by her secret pecuniary aids to the Hugonots, she enabled them again to take the field against Charles, and to procure from his successor, Henry III. conditions comparatively favourable.† 1579.

When the gallant King of Navarre was afterwards called to the throne of France, she openly assisted him against that formidable league of the

* Digges, p. 335.

† Camden, p. 432.

1590. Catholics, which threatened ruin to them both. The apprehended desertion of his Swiss and German auxiliaries she prevented by a gift of twenty-two thousand pounds, a greater sum, as he declared, than he had ever before seen ; and she added a reinforcement of four thousand men, to whose valour he owed some important successes. A body of Spanish forces having been introduced into Brittany, she furnished three thousand men to hasten the expulsion of these dangerous neighbours ; but stipulated that her charges should be repaid her in a twelvemonth, or as soon as the enemy was expelled.*

1591. She afterwards sent another reinforcement of four thousand men to effect

* Camden, p. 561. When we compare these diminutive aids with the immense armaments sent to the assistance of allies in the present times, we may be surprised to hear Burleigh extolling the liberality of Elizabeth on this occasion, as something altogether extraordinary. Alluding, in a letter to our envoy in France, to this body of auxiliaries under Sir John Norris, he adds, " and besides that, her majesty hath presently sent away certain of her ships of war under the charge of Sir Henry Palmer, with the number of a thousand men or thereabouts, to serve upon the coast of Bretagne against the Spaniards, and against the Leaguers, thereby her majesty's charges grow daily so great, as the French king hath great cause to acknowledge her majesty's goodness towards him, *beyond all other friendships that he hath in the world.* And therefore you may do well when you find opportunity, to notify these so great charges both of her majesty and of her realm, as we may hereafter find thankfulness both in the king and in his subjects." Birch's *Memoirs of Eliz.* Vol. I. p. 66.

this object, which proved of great difficulty. Finally, she formed an alliance with the French king, in which it was agreed that they should make no peace with Philip but by common consent ; that she should assist Henry with a reinforcement of four thousand men ; and that he, in return, should refund her charges in a twelvemonth, employ a body of troops in aid of her forces in expelling the Spaniards from Brittany, and consign into her hands a seaport of that province for a retreat to the English. * On various occasions she advanced him sums to the amount of a hundred thousand pounds, but always in the form of a loan : and when, at length, he began to acquire a decided superiority over his enemies, her succours became more sparing as his exigencies became less pressing.

While Elizabeth thus avoided a waste of her resources, her aid was so efficient, that Henry the Fourth gratefully attributed his triumph to her assistance. A more liberal distribution of her succours would often have been agreeable to him, yet, as he could not but admire a conduct so wise, and dictated by maxims so congenial to his own, he continued her steady and sincere friend to the end of her life. Accustomed as we have been, in the present age, to see vast expeditions undertaken against our continental enemies, and vast subsidies

* Rymer, Vol. XVI.

thrown, without reflection, into the hands of our allies; we may be apt to look on this policy of Elizabeth's government as timid and ungenerous. Yet, with an expence of men and money, almost too trifling to be perceptible, it procured, for England, advantages, greater perhaps than would have resulted from mighty armaments, and lavish disbursements. Her Protestant allies were not alarmed by the overwhelming succours of an ancient enemy, nor rendered odious in the sight of their countrymen, by a too evident dependence on a foreign power. The French people were not roused to any general combination against her, from the apprehension of passing under her yoke, or sustaining the dismemberment of their territory.

Policy
towards
Scotland.

The policy which the English government pursued with respect to Scotland, led to some of the most questionable incidents of Elizabeth's reign. That country, narrow and thinly peopled as it was, required the incessant attention of its southern neighbour. England, divided from the rest of the world by stormy seas, on which her own fleets now began to ride triumphant, could not be assailed without the most imminent hazard. As a foreign enemy, surrounded by an uncertain element and annoyed by her fleets, which might eventually cut off both his supplies and his retreat, could hope for safety only from her entire subjugation; the preparations requisite for such an enterprise would be

too vast to be long concealed, and too protracted to be completed before her plans for defence should be matured. But against Scotland she was aided by no such bulwark : in that country stood an array of combatants, dexterous in regular warfare, and separated from her only by a fordable river, or an imaginary line ; they might assemble and invade her in force, before the news of their approach could reach the seat of government. Even if her hasty levies should succeed in repelling the incursion, still the enemy might retire to his own country, loaded with booty, and secure from pursuit ; while the loss of a battle might expose all her northern counties to devastation.

These, the permanent dangers from an enemy in the north, were at this time increased by circumstances of great importance. Since Mary, the youthful Queen of Scotland, had espoused the heir apparent to the throne of France, the counsels and energies of both these countries were under the control of her ambitious maternal uncles, the princes of Lorraine. The enterprises which these daring leaders had planned, led them to exert the whole of their power in attempting to dethrone Elizabeth. They had founded their plans on standing forth as the champions of the church, and leaders of the Catholic league ; while the power of Elizabeth formed the great bulwark of the Protestants. Nor did their means seem inadequate to the mighty

undertaking of subverting her throne, and acquiring the uncontrolled sway of the three kingdoms. The title of their niece, Mary, to the throne of England, was accounted preferable to that of Elizabeth by all good Catholics, who held the marriage of Henry with Catharine to be indissoluble, unless by the authority of the pope. The portion of the English people which still adhered to the Romish communion was considerable, while the favourers of the Reformation in Scotland seemed as yet no ways formidable. If heresy could there be checked in the bud, and the whole Scottish nation rendered the partisans of their cause; the princes of Lorraine had grounds for expectations by no means chimerical. From France, from Spain, and the other countries which abetted the Catholic league, they might hope to pour into Scotland such a body of disciplined troops, as, uniting with the natives, and entering England on her defenceless side, should disperse the raw levies of Elizabeth, and place their niece on her throne.

These intentions were manifested by the first movements in the gigantic plan. No sooner was the death of Mary of England announced in France, than the Queen of Scots and her husband endeavoured to keep alive the hopes of their partisans, by assuming the arms and title of King and Queen of England. This parade proved rather injurious than useful to the projects of the house of Guise,

by discovering their designs, and putting their enemies on their guard ; but more energetic measures were, in conformity to their counsels, adopted by their sister, the Queen Dowager and Regent of Scotland. That princess, naturally moderate and politic, had hitherto pursued a system so mild and conciliating, as had, in a great measure, lulled the dangerous dissensions of her country. Now, however, from an undue subserviency to the designs of her brothers, the fatal error of her character, she began to attempt the extirpation of Protestantism; by mingling a cruelty which should have shocked her humanity, with a faithlessness from which her moral feelings ought to have revolted. The sufferers at length betook themselves to arms ; but the vigour and dexterity of the regent, supported by a body of veteran French troops, soon compelled them to implore assistance from the common protectress of the Reformation.

There were certain circumstances which rendered Elizabeth much less forward in their support than her interest seemed to demand. The principles of the Scottish Protestants, especially in regard to the form of worship, went far beyond her ideas of reformation ; and the strong tincture of republicanism, which appeared in their politics, rendered them, in her eyes, suspected and dangerous. To abet rebellious subjects, is always a delicate undertaking for sovereigns ; but in a country so closely

connected with her own, by vicinity, language, and manners, it seemed most unsafe to encourage the supporters of those civil and religious principles, which, at home, all her authority was employed to suppress. * To these dissuasives, her love of economy gave additional force; since it was manifest that the necessities of the Scots would require considerable supplies, while their poverty left her no hope of reimbursement.

It was, we are informed, by the representations of Cecil, that she at length permitted these considerations to give way to others still more urgent and important. Two papers, written with his own hand, and still preserved, contain the reasonings in which he explained to the Queen and her council the propriety and necessity of interfering in the affairs of Scotland. † Setting out with the principle that every society has a right to provide for its security both against present and future dangers, and to turn against its enemies the means employed by them for its annoyance; he proceeds to show, that the safety of England could be secured only by sending powerful and immediate assistance to the Scottish Protestants. Elizabeth felt the force of these arguments; but her first

* Elizabeth's Letter to the Earl of Beldford, in Appendix, No. XIII. to Robertson's Scotland.

† Burnet, Vol. III. Appendix.

succours, consisting in some small remittances of money, were so inadequate, as to produce no effect in favour of her friends. Afterwards, however, when Scotland could not otherwise be rescued from entire subjugation by her enemies, she formed with the Protestants a league offensive and defensive; sent a powerful fleet to guard the Forth against reinforcements from France, and, by the aid of a land force, enabled the Scots to drive the French from the field, and besiege them in their last refuge at Leith.

This timely and vigorous effort, in support of the Scottish Protestants, led to a treaty in which Cecil and Dr Wotton, the plenipotentiaries of Elizabeth, partly from their talents, partly from the desperate situation of their enemies, procured the most advantageous terms for their allies. The Scottish parliament, of which the great majority now adhered to the reformed faith, obtained almost the whole direction of public affairs. It was stipulated, that this assembly should meet and act with the same full powers as if formally convoked by the sovereign: that, during the absence of their young queen, the administration should be vested in twelve commissioners, of which the queen should select seven, and the parliament five, out of twenty-four persons named by the parliament: that, without the consent of this assembly, neither war should be declared nor peace concluded: that the French

troops should be immediately removed to their own country, and the fortresses of Leith and Dunbar, then in their possession, demolished : that in future no foreign troops should be introduced, and no fort erected, without the permission of parliament : that no foreigner should hereafter be advanced to any place of trust or dignity in the kingdom : and that there should be a general act of amnesty for those who had opposed the measures of government. The security of the Protestant faith was fully provided for by an article which left all matters respecting religion to the decision of parliament.*

The politic moderation of Elizabeth and her ministers was conspicuous in the articles stipulated for England. The English forces as well as the French were to be withdrawn from Scotland ; former treaties were renewed, and the only additional article was, that the right of Elizabeth to the English throne should be formally acknowledged, Mary and her husband ceasing, from thence forward, to assume the title, or bear the arms of England. Elizabeth had indeed enjoined her plenipotentiaries to demand five hundred thousand crowns, and the restitution of Calais, as a compensation for the indignity already offered to her, by the assumption of her arms and title : but these conditions, to which

* Keith, 137. Rymer, Vol. XV. p. 593.

the French commissioners had no power to agree, were at length referred to future discussion. *

At so small an expence, and with an exertion so trivial, compared to the magnitude of the object, did the English government, by its vigour and sagacity, succeed in giving a complete ascendancy to its Protestant allies in Scotland. And when the Catholic religion was abolished, and the reformed established by law, that country, instead of affording particular facilities to the enemies of Elizabeth, became a new bulwark to her throne.

The return of Mary to Scotland, and her assumption of the reins of government, led to plans of policy, in which the passions of Elizabeth interfered so much with the dictates of her understanding, and the counsels of her ministers ; that we are bewildered amidst the effects of an irresolution, duplicity, and contradiction, which her usual systematic procedure does not prepare us to expect. The unfortunate Mary undertook the administration of her kingdom in circumstances, where the sagacity of experience, and the coolness of age, could scarcely have conducted, to a successful issue, the delicate interests committed to youth and indiscretion. Her subjects, still in the ferment of a religious revolution, entertained violent prejudices

Policy
towards
Mary
Queen of
Scots.

* See Letter of Elizabeth to Cecil and Wotton, in Lodge's Illustrations of British History, Vol. I. p. 338.

against their sovereign. It was fresh in their recollection, that the cruel persecutions, from which they had just escaped, were carried on at the instigation of Mary's uncles, and under the authority of her mother; and they knew that plans were concerted by the house of Guise for the final extirpation of the Protestant religion. Unfortunately they had too strong reasons to suspect that their queen, devoted to popery and to the will of her uncles, would not scruple to concur in the most dangerous designs. Stimulated by these considerations, they scrutinized every step of her conduct with the most jealous care: and as the rudeness of manners in that age had been heightened by the convulsions and dangers of a revolution, they treated her with a harshness, which, in her eyes, might well appear indignity to a sovereign, and brutality to a woman.

Mary, educated in the polished, gay, and arbitrary court of France, was equally shocked with the coarseness of the Scots, the moroseness of their manners, and the republican principles which they had imbibed with their new religion. Nor were her more serious thoughts less outraged than her taste. While scarcely allowed to exercise, in her private chapel, those rites to which she was fondly attached, she daily heard them treated with insulting contumely, and herself reproached as a deluded and desperate idolatress. With a spirit too

high, and with passions too lively to submit to such mortification, or to win the confidence of her people by a train of prudent and conciliating measures ; she endeavoured, in the conversation and amusements of a few favourite domestics, to recall her former scenes of enjoyment, and to lose the recollection of her present hardships. But by a peculiar infelicity, the attachments of Mary were more fatal to her happiness than even her aversions ; and the unworthy objects, on whom her affection was successively fixed, proved the principal means of precipitating her ruin. By her choice of a youth, whose head and heart were no less defective than his external appearance was captivating, a Catholic in his creed, and a libertine in his morals, she shocked the pious, and alienated the wise : * and when her infatuated fondness was soon succeeded by unconquerable aversion, the change was attributed, not to the return of reason, but the fickleness of passion. The confidence and familiarity, with which she distinguished an unworthy minion, seemed to argue a strange depravity of taste ; which her enemies readily accounted for, by supposing a still stranger depravity of morals. But when, in opposition to the united voice of her subjects, to all laws divine and human, she bestowed her affections on

* See Letter from Randolph to Leicester, in Appendix XI. to Robertson's Scotland.

the murderer of her husband, screened him from the vengeance of outraged justice, and made him the partaker of her bed and her authority ; the indignation of her subjects could no longer be kept within the bounds of allegiance. They took up arms against her, formally deposed her from the sovereignty, and finally compelled her to seek for refuge in England.

During these transactions, the interference of the English government was hesitating, indecisive, and contradictory. The confidential ministers of Elizabeth, strongly tinged with the religious opinions of the Scottish reformers, and looking on the ascendancy of Mary as the chief source of danger to their government, appear to have been unanimously of opinion that the Scottish Protestants ought to be supported ; and their queen, if not dethroned, at least involved in perpetual difficulties. Had Elizabeth consulted merely her personal feelings towards Mary, her measures would have been no less hostile than the counsels of her ministers. Her resentment against a competitor who had assumed her title, and affected to consider her birth as illegitimate, was aggravated by hatred of a rival who eclipsed her in those personal charms of which she was no less tenacious than of her sovereignty. The animosity thus fostered in her breast became apparent on various occasions. When Mary, on her return from France to her

own dominions, solicited a safe conduct from Elizabeth, this request, although a mere matter of complaisance, was refused by the latter, with an ill-humour which seemed to indicate very unfriendly intentions.* In the same manner, every overture for the marriage of the Scottish queen was industriously counteracted by her jealous neighbour; and when Darnley at length became the object of her choice, Elizabeth reproached her with this marriage, as with a crime against herself and her government. Nor did Mary take any measures to conciliate a rival whom she looked on as the usurper of her rights, and the enemy of her person and religion. She refused to ratify that article of the treaty of Edinburgh by which she was bound to renounce her claims to the English throne; and she occasionally expressed her indignation, with more frankness than prudence, against the ill-concealed malignity of Elizabeth.†

Yet, notwithstanding her personal animosity to Mary, the queen of England was far from entering cordially into the views of the Scottish Protestants. Their tenets, both civil and religious, so nearly allied to those of her own puritans, were the object of her decided aversion; their ascendancy was the last means by which she wished the

* See Appendix VI. to Robertson's Scotland.

† Keith, App. 133.

humiliation of her rival. The imprudent attachments, and the consequent unpopularity and ignominy of the Scottish queen, probably afforded her more satisfaction than regret ; and it appears that her ambassadors, of themselves well-inclined to the task, were encouraged in fomenting the dissensions between the court and the people of Scotland. But when the " Congregation " proceeded to try their sovereign for the crimes of which she was accused, and to deprive her of her throne and her liberty, in consequence of their own award, the high monarchical sentiments of Elizabeth were alarmed. She sternly demanded an explanation of their presumptuous conduct ; and as their republican justification was even more offensive to her than their measures, she endeavoured by threats to procure the release and restoration of their sovereign. She seems even to have formed the resolution of attempting this object by force of arms, in opposition to the strenuous remonstrances of Cecil and her other ministers, who represented the danger of employing her arms to crush her most useful friends, and reinstate her mortal enemy. So thoroughly were the Scottish Protestants convinced of her alienation from their interests, that they refused her ambassador admittance to their captive queen, and prepared to support themselves by other alliances. Already had their overtures been favourably received by the French, who made

no scruple of abandoning Mary, provided they could maintain their ascendancy in Scotland ; and the English resident had repeatedly warned his court of this danger, inevitable, unless Elizabeth should alter her conduct towards the Scottish Protestants. *

The escape of Mary from confinement, and her subsequent retreat into England, produced a new course of policy on the part of Elizabeth. Her confidential ministers, more alive to the supposed interests of their country and religion than to the dictates of generosity, seem to have been unanimously of opinion, that the Scottish queen, instead of being aided by Elizabeth against her subjects, should, under specious pretences, be detained in a lasting captivity. † Her enmity to the Protestant religion, and to Elizabeth, they considered implacable ; and were she restored by the arms of England to her throne, she would not, they thought, scruple to turn her regained authority against her benefactors. On the other hand, her detention

1568.

Advice of
Cecil to
Elizabeth.

* See a Letter from Sir Nicholas Throgmorton to Cecil, in Appendix XXI. to Robertson's Scotland. Also from the same to Queen Elizabeth, *ibid*.

† Lodge, Vol. II. p. 4, 5. A remarkable Letter from the Earl of Sussex to Cecil, written so early after the flight of Mary as the 22d of October 1568, and containing an urgent exhortation to that very policy which was afterwards pursued with regard to her, is inserted in Appendix IV. Also the deliberations of Cecil on the same subject.

would give the English government a complete control over the affairs of Scotland ; for the Scottish Protestants would not fail to respect her will, while she had their queen in her hands, and could punish them by restoring an exasperated sovereign to their throne. Nor did they see how these advantages could be attained by a procedure less harsh than the captivity of Mary. To refuse her an asylum would be replete with danger : that high-spirited princess would not fail to raise France and Spain in her cause ; to procure from their willing ambition large forces for her restoration ; and, stimulated both by ancient and recent animosities, to employ her recovered power in hostility to England.

These representations produced a powerful impression on Elizabeth, confirmed as they were by certain peculiarities in the situation of her rival, which admitted of severe measures being taken against her, without compromising the cause of sovereigns, or exciting general indignation against herself. Mary was accused of a crime horrible to mankind,—participation in the murder of her husband ; and her marriage with his reputed murderer had impressed a belief of her guilt, not easily to be effaced. While she laboured under the general indignation, her detention would be applauded by many, and warmly resented by none. On the other hand, the throne, if upheld as a sanctuary

for such crimes, would become odious in the eyes of all ; and Elizabeth, in supporting such a tenet, would weaken her own authority while she outraged the feelings of mankind.

These considerations made Elizabeth determine to detain the Scottish queen, not as a royal guest, who had come to claim her protection, but as a prisoner brought by happy accident into her power. From this commencement, her hatred to Mary progressively increased by a variety of causes. Conscious that the detention of Mary was a new source of resentment, the commission of the injury became a cause for its aggravation. Deriving, from the ill-advised concessions, and subsequent retractations of the Scottish queen, a semblance of right to judge in her cause, and a colour for assuming her guilt as undeniable, both she and her people came gradually to regard the captive less as a sovereign princess, than as a criminal subject of England. The mind of Elizabeth was perpetually agitated by the apprehension of her prisoner's escape, and more than once, by the discovery of conspiracies, which Mary incautiously countenanced. All these proved new incentives to her hatred, and prompted her to a measure from which her tenderness for the rights of sovereigns would at first have made her revolt with horror.

From the letters and the conduct of Elizabeth in regard to Mary, we perceive that she aimed at two

Feelings of
Elizabeth
towards Ma-
ry.

irreconcilable objects. She longed for the destruction of her dangerous prisoner, and she no less earnestly desired to have it accomplished without her apparent concurrence or connivance. She seems to have long hoped that Mary would sink under the rigours of her confinement, or fall a sacrifice to the discontent of her keeper. The Earl of Shrewsbury, to whose custody she was entrusted, was subjected to great restraint and privation. Although entirely devoted to Elizabeth, and sufficiently willing to deprive Mary of every enjoyment, * his disposition was rendered still more narrow and intractable, by the severe and ungenerous usage which he experienced from his sovereign. The allowances which he received for the maintenance of the Queen of Scots were so inadequate, that the deficiency impaired his private fortune; and after many years of this unprofitable charge, when he at length expected some signal mark of royal bounty, to his inexpressible astonishment and mortification, he received an order from court, by which his appointments, instead of being increased, were diminished one half.† When the retrenchments which this strange piece of econo-

* See Shrewsbury's Letter to Lord Burghley, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 69.

† Letters from the same to the same, *ibid.* p. 244, 270, 272,

my naturally led him to make in the diet and accommodations of Mary, were complained of by the French ambassador, Shrewsbury received a letter from court, expressing the displeasure of his queen in strong terms, but containing no intimation that his former allowances would be restored. *

Other circumstances concurred to make Shrewsbury dissatisfied with his charge. As his whole time and attention were occupied in watching over his prisoner, his private affairs were neglected; and his tenants, in various parts of the country, taking advantage of his situation, contrived to evade his claims, by involving him in troublesome law-suits. † If he ventured on an excursion from the residence of Mary, he was sure to be reminded,‡ by a severe reprimand, of his duty. § If a friend happened to pay him a visit, a letter full of insinuations, showed him that the jealousy of his sovereign was roused. At length, by a strange excess of severity, his very children were not permitted to visit him; and he was almost reduced to despair, when his earnest entreaties, seconded by the friendship of Cecil,

* Letter from Leicester to Shrewsbury, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 253.

† Letter from the Earl of Shrewsbury, *ibid.* p. 275. ‡ *Ibid.*

§ Letter from Shrewsbury to the queen, *ibid.* p. 246.

and some of the other ministers, procured his release from an intolerable bondage. *

To Sir Amias Paulet, one of the gentlemen to whom the royal prisoner was afterwards committed, Elizabeth seems to have given a much more explicit intimation of her wishes. Paulet had entered into the loyal association for bringing to punishment all pretenders to the throne, who should attempt her life; and she seemed to expect that he would rid her of her enemy, without subjecting her to the necessity, which she so earnestly wished to avoid, of actually signing the death-warrant. † This gentleman refused to be her instrument in so base a deed, which she would have both disavowed and punished; and no other course remained, but to authorize the execution of the sentence against Mary; but Elizabeth affected the utmost reluctance to a step which her Parliament and people, who heartily hated and dreaded the Queen of Scots, so earnestly pressed. To such a length were her hopes of deceiving mankind by this duplicity carried, that, even after having deliberately signed the warrant, and delivered it to Davison, her Secretary of State, she pretended, on hearing that it was actually executed, the utmost

* Letter from Shrewsbury to Lord Burghley, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 217. Letter from the same, p. 248.

† Secretary Davison's Apology, in Camden's Annals, p. 545.

astonishment, grief, and indignation. Loudly accusing the secretary of having surreptitiously sent off the warrant, in direct opposition to her inclination, she caused the unfortunate man to be subjected, on this charge, to a heavy fine, which she levied, to his utter ruin.

If the part which Cecil bore in these transactions has brought censure on his memory, it brought no less unhappiness on his mind. His opinion respecting the Queen of Scots, and the manner of her treatment, coincided with those of his colleagues in office. While he looked on her as the most dangerous enemy of his sovereign and his religion, he considered her liberty, and even her life, as scarcely compatible with the safety of either. Yet her confinement freed him neither from anxiety nor danger; his vigilance was incessantly occupied in counteracting the plots of her partizans, which aimed to involve himself and his queen in one destruction. Mary even proved a source of disquietude to him, in a way which he could least have expected. Having, from motives of humanity, obtained Elizabeth's reluctant consent, that the captive queen, whose health had suffered much from confinement, should be carried to Buxton Wells for her recovery, * he happened, during her stay there, to visit the same place for

Distress
caused to
Cecil by the
affairs of
Mary.

* Letter from Cecil to Shrewsbury, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 111.

the relief of his own complaints. His jealous sovereign, connecting this accidental meeting with his frequent applications to mitigate the severities practised against Mary, (for he was averse to all unnecessary harshness,) conceived the strange suspicion, that he had a private understanding with the Queen of Scots, and had repaired to Buxton for the purpose of maturing some treacherous project. * Nor was this chimerical surmise the transient apprehension of a moment. On his return to court, he was charged by Elizabeth with this imaginary intrigue, in terms most injurious to his tried fidelity ; and he found it prudent to decline a match between his daughter and the son of the Earl of Shrewsbury, the keeper of Mary, and the supposed agent in their secret negotiations. †

But while thus strangely suspected by Elizabeth, Cecil was, above all others, obnoxious to the partisans of Mary. Having been the chief means of discovering and overthrowing the conspiracies of Norfolk, he was reproached as the cause of that popular nobleman's death ; though the repetition of the duke's treasonable attempts, after he had once been pardoned, seemed to render him no fit object of royal clemency. To consider Cecil as his private enemy, seems altogether unfair. He was in-

* Letter from Cecil to Shrewsbury, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 130.

† Ibid. p. 130.

strumental in procuring the pardon of Norfolk after his first offence; he endeavoured, by salutary counsels, to dissuade him from the prosecution of his pernicious schemes; and, in some of his writings, which still remain, he laments the infatuation of his Grace, which rendered all good subjects his public enemies, however they might respect his private virtues.* Yet the whole odium of Norfolk's death was thrown on him; and the general reproach was countenanced by the unblushing duplicity of Elizabeth. That princess, though she had authorized the execution without any reluctance, was anxious to have it believed that she had only yielded to the importunities of Cecil. The minister was, for some time after, treated as a person who had deluded her into an act repugnant to her nature; and he was not received again into her presence and favour, until she thought that appearances were sufficiently satisfied. But he had yet to connect a private and deeper affliction with the fate of Norfolk. One of Cecil's daughters was unfortunately married to a profligate husband, the Earl of Oxford: that young nobleman, much attached to Norfolk, threatened his father-in-law, that, unless he would undertake to procure the duke's pardon, he would do all in his power to

* Camden, p. 255. Lloyd's State Worthies, p. 340. Burleigh's Meditation on the reign of Elizabeth, &c.

ruin his daughter. This threat he executed with inhuman punctuality: and after having deserted her bed, and squandered his fortune in the most abandoned courses, he brought, by a train of barbarous usage, his innocent victim to an untimely grave. *

The selfish Elizabeth felt no remorse in attempting to load Cecil with the odium of the execution of Mary, as well as of Norfolk. He appears to have had no greater share in advising it than the other ministers; but as he was accounted a principal enemy of the Queen of Scots, Elizabeth judged that an imputation against him would be most readily received; and with this ungenerous view, she banished him from her presence, and treated him with all the harshness due to an unfaithful counsellor. Cecil appears, on this occasion, to have been seriously alarmed; ministers were not, in that age, protected against the crown, and the misfortunes of Secretary Davison, then passing before his eyes, proved to him that, if Elizabeth should account a further sacrifice necessary for her purposes, little was to be expected either from her justice or gratitude. But as the sincerity of her indignation had been testified, sufficiently for political purposes, by the ruin of Davison, and as the services of Cecil were too useful to be dispensed

* Dugdale's Baronage, Vol. II. p. 169.

with, she suffered herself to be at length mollified, and received him again into favour. *

We have now taken a survey of the part acted by Cecil in regard to religion, to domestic, and to foreign policy. A striking characteristic, and one hardly ever possessed to an equal degree by other statesmen, was a uniformity in his plans, the result of a mind always cool and deliberate, seldom blinded by prejudice, and never precipitated by passion. On some occasions we may dissent from his opinion, and in a few, we may suspect the qualities of his heart : but, in general, we must allow that the measures, which Elizabeth pursued in opposition to his sentiments, were the chief defects of her government ; while those, which she adopted in conformity to his counsels, produced the boasted prosperity and glory of her reign. Uniformity of Cecil's policy.

It has long since been observed, that the most successful statesman is scarcely an object of envy ; that his pre-eminence is dearly purchased by unceasing disquietudes, and that his honours are an inadequate compensation for his mortifications and dangers. While nations, like individuals, are liable to be agitated by violent passions, and misled by false views of interest, the advocate of moderation His mortifications.

* Strype's Annals, Vol. III. p. 370.

and peace is often the object of popular reproach. Such was not unfrequently the case of Cecil. So wildly were the minds of men possessed with the prospect of military glory and Mexican gold, that his opposition to the continuance of the Spanish war subjected him even to personal danger from the populace. The more violent among the clergy, because he attempted to restrain their persecuting spirit, reviled him as a puritan in disguise, as a secret enemy to the church ; while the more zealous dissenters were no less suspicious of his endeavours to persuade them into conformity. From his supposed influence in public affairs, the enemies of government were also his personal enemies. The friends of Mary Queen of Scots, and the partisans of the popish religion, regarded him as their capital foe ; and not satisfied with incessantly defaming him by libels, they attempted more than once to take him off by assassination. In one of these attempts, for which two assassins were executed, the Spanish ambassador was suspected to have been concerned, and was, in consequence, ordered to depart the kingdom.

His influence with Elizabeth exposed him to equal hatred from the majority of the courtiers. The Earl of Leicester was at the head of all the intrigues against him, and made, on one occasion, a bold effort to accomplish his ruin. In concert with the principal courtiers, he planned that Cecil

should be unexpectedly accused before the privy-council, arrested without the knowledge of the queen, and immediately sent to the Tower. When thus removed from the queen's presence, abundance of accusations, it was imagined, might be procured to elicit her consent to his trial and condemnation. * This plot had nearly reached its accomplishment, and Cecil was resisting his accusers in the privy-council with very little effect; when Elizabeth, who had been privately informed of the design, suddenly entered the room, and addressed, to the astonished counsellors, one of those appalling reprimands, which were more distinguished for vigour than delicacy. †

As a compensation for these disquietudes, and a recompense for his services, we should not be surprised to find Cecil loaded with the favours of his sovereign. But that princess was proverbially frugal of her rewards. Her love of economy was frequently carried to a blameable excess, and her confidential ministers abridged of the means to serve her with advantage. There remain various letters of Sir Francis Walsingham, complaining of his being wholly unable, on his scanty appointments, to support his establishment, though very inadequate to his quality of ambassador in France. ‡

Offices and
honours.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 19.

† Camden's Annals, Eliz.

‡ Harleian MSS. in British Museum, No. 260.

Other ministers had equal reason for complaint ; and there were many more fortunes spent than made in her service. In the distribution of honours her frugality was no less conspicuous, and could be ascribed only to sound policy, uninfluenced by meaner motives. Aware that titles, unless accounted indicative of real merit in those on whom they were bestowed, would cease to confer distinction, she distributed them with a careful and sparing hand ; and the honours of the Earl of Leicester afford perhaps a solitary instance, in her reign, of a title acquired without desert. A title from Elizabeth was consequently a real reward, and was deemed an adequate retribution for the most important services.

1569. If Cecil was better rewarded than the other ministers, we must own that his claims were greater ; and we shall find that the favours which he received were neither hastily bestowed, nor carried beyond his merits. In consequence of his efforts in repressing the rebellion which attended the Duke of Norfolk's first conspiracy, he was created a baron, the highest title he ever attained. The other favours which he received, consisting in official situations, could hardly be denominated rewards, since they brought him additional business, which he executed with punctuality and diligence. After concluding the treaty of Edinburgh, he was appointed Master of the Wards, an office in virtue

of which he had to preside in the Court of Wards, and to determine a variety of questions between the sovereign and the subject. Eleven years afterwards, Lord Burleigh (such was his new title) was raised to the office of Lord High Treasurer, which, along with great dignity, brought him an immense addition of complicated business. An accumulation of offices in the hands of one man naturally led to much envy, and was certainly a very blameable precedent; but the fidelity and ability with which he executed their duties must, in his case, alleviate the censure of posterity.

Lord Burleigh continued minister during a period of unexampled length, and in an age when men in office were exposed to the rudest assaults of faction and intrigue. To investigate the means by which he maintained his station cannot fail to be instructive, devoid, as they were, of the craft and subtlety so frequently connected with the name of politician. The arts to which he owed his success were not less honourable than skilful, and would have raised him to influence and reputation in the walks of private life. For nothing was he more remarkable than for his unremitting diligence and scrupulous punctuality. Whatever the engagements of others, whether the pursuit of pleasure, or the cabals of the court, Burleigh was always found at his post, intensely occupied with the duties of office and the cares of government.

Political
characteris-
tics.

Diligence
and punc-
tuality.

A young courtier of those times, while describing the intrigues with which all around him were busied, observes, " My Lord Treasurer, even after the old manner, dealeth with matters of state only, and beareth himself very uprightly." * The degree of his industry may be estimated from its effects, which were altogether wonderful. As principal Secretary of State, and, for a considerable time, as sole Secretary, he managed a great proportion of the public business, both foreign and domestic : he conducted negotiations, planned expeditions, watched over the machinations of internal enemies, employed private sources of intelligence, assisted at the deliberations of the privy-council and parliament, and wrote many tracts on the state of affairs. When created Lord High Treasurer, his concern with the general affairs of government continued, while he had, moreover, to attend to the receipts and disbursements of the nation, to devise means for replenishing the treasury, and to sit occasionally in the Court of Exchequer, as judge between the people and the officers of the revenue. As Master of the Court of Wards, he had much judicial occupation during term, for his equitable decisions brought before him an unusual accumulation of suits. Nor did he neglect those numer-

* Letter from Gilbert Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 100.

ous petitions with which he was perpetually importuned, some demanding the reward of services, others imploring the redress of injuries ; and, amidst all these avocations, his private affairs were managed with the same precision as those of the state.

All this load of business, he was enabled, by assiduous application and exact method, to dispatch without either hurry or confusion. In conformity to his favourite maxim, that " the shortest way to do many things is to do only one thing at once," he finished each branch of business before he proceeded to another, and never left a thing undone with the view of recurring to it at a period of more leisure. In the courts where he presided, he dispatched as many causes in one term as his predecessors in a twelvemonth.* When pressed with an accumulation of affairs, which frequently happened, he rather chose to encroach on the moderate intervals usually allowed to his meals and his sleep, than to omit any part of his task. Even when labouring under pain, and in danger of increasing his malady, he frequently caused himself to be carried to his office, for the dispatch of business. An eye-witness assures us that, during a period of twenty-four years, he never saw him idle for half an hour together ; † and if he had no particular

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 21.

† Ibid. p. 24.

task to execute, which rarely happened, he would still busy himself in reading, writing, or meditating. * By incessant practice, he acquired a facility and dispatch, which seemed altogether wonderful to idle courtiers; it proved of incalculable advantage to government, and to himself it gave a decided superiority over his less industrious rivals.

His reserve
in public
affairs.

Next to his unequalled diligence and punctuality, we are to rank his invincible reserve, whenever reserve was necessary. While he avoided that system of deception, by which statesmen have so often undertaken to gain their ends, he succeeded in concealing his real views, by the mere maintenance of a guarded secrecy. Perfectly impenetrable to the dexterous agents who were employed to sound him, his unaltered countenance and unembarrassed motions afforded no means to divine the impressions produced on him by any communications. Equally hopeless was the attempt to arrive at his political secrets by procuring access to his most intimate friends; for he had no confidants. † “Attempts,” he said, “are most likely to succeed when planned deliberately, carried secretly, and executed speedily.” ‡

The resolution with which he could persevere in his reserve was remarkably exemplified in his

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 63.

† Ibid. p. 64.

‡ Ibid. p. 69.

silence with respect to the succession to the throne. Three rival families at that time claimed this splendid inheritance, the houses of Suffolk and Hastings, and the royal line of Scotland ; the title of either might have been rendered preferable by an act of parliament. But Burleigh saw the danger of declaring in favour of one or other. All were at present restrained from improper attempts by their expectations ; but if the intentions of the queen were once known, the disappointed families might be apt to embrace those violent measures, from which alone they could then hope for success. He determined therefore to maintain a profound silence on this delicate question ; and the queen, probably in consequence of his counsels, adopted and persevered in the same resolution, in spite of all the remonstrances with which she was assailed. The parliament often attempted to force a disclosure of her sentiments, and she and her minister found much difficulty in eluding their importunities : yet Burleigh carried his opinion with him to the grave, and Elizabeth disclosed hers only on her death-bed.

No statesman was ever more distinguished for self-command and moderation. Collected, calm, and energetic, in the most critical emergencies, he bore adversity without any signs of dejection, and prosperity without any apparent elevation.* Yet

Moderation
and self-
command.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 30.

his coolness had in it nothing repulsive; and his self-command was chiefly exerted in repressing angry emotions. In council, he was always the strenuous advocate of moderate and conciliating measures;* and it was his particular boast that, notwithstanding the extent of his private as well as his public transactions, he had never sued, nor been sued by any man.† He bore the attacks of his opponents without any appearance of resentment, and in due season, embraced opportunities to promote their interest. When the Earl of Leicester, who had always thwarted his measures, and often calumniated his character, at length fell under the queen's displeasure, Burleigh successfully exerted himself to prevent his total loss of favour.‡ Nor did he hesitate to form a cordial reconciliation with Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, who had long been one of his most dangerous enemies, and who had desisted from his practices only when he found Burleigh's power too firmly established to be shaken. Although Essex was his avowed and turbulent opponent, yet, when Elizabeth refused some just claim of that nobleman, the Lord Treasurer sup-

* "Win hearts," he was accustomed to say to the queen, "and you have their hands and purses." Rushworth's Collections, Vol. I. p. 469.

† Bacon's Works, Vol. IV. p. 372.

‡ Letter of Lord Burghley in the Earl of Hardwicke's Miscellaneous State Papers, Vol. I. p. 329.

ported his cause with so much firmness, that the enraged queen at length bestowed on him some of those vehement epithets by which she made her courtiers feel her displeasure. * It was observed that he never spoke harshly of his enemies, nor embraced any opportunity of revenge : and as he was no less on his guard to avoid every undue bias from affection, it became a general remark that he was a better enemy than a friend. † “ I entertain,” he said, “ malice against no individual whatever ; and I thank God that I never retired to rest out of charity with any man.” ‡

Burleigh possessed great discernment in select- Patronage
ing, and great zeal in recommending, men of talent of men of
talents.
for public employments. He seemed resolved that England should be distinguished above all nations for the integrity of her judges, the piety of her divines, and the sagacity of her ambassadors. § It was he who discovered, and brought into office, Sir Francis Walsingham, so much distinguished, among the ministers of Elizabeth, for acuteness of penetration, extensive knowledge of public affairs, and profound acquaintance with human nature. The department of foreign affairs was long almost exclusively under the management of Burleigh, and

* Birch's Memoirs, Vol. II. p. 147.

† Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 59.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid. p. 46, 55.

there is perhaps no period in the history of England, in which her intercourse with other countries was committed to such able hands, and in which her ambassadors confessedly excelled those of other nations in diplomatic talents. By this attention to merit and neglect of interest, the Treasurer naturally incurred much obloquy from those whom his penetration caused him to neglect ; the nobility, in particular, expressed high displeasure at the preference so often given to commons, and seemed to think that offices which they could not execute, like honours which they had not earned, should be entailed on them and their descendants.

His desire of
publicity.

Cecil was never the advocate of compulsory or arbitrary measures. Open discussion, far from being attended with danger, was, in his opinion, the most effectual and innocent means of expending the fury of faction ; a forced silence seemed to him only to concenter and aggravate popular resentment. In the courts where he presided, he never gave a judgment without explaining the grounds on which he proceeded ; * in matters of state, he refused to give his opinion, unless where he might bring forward and debate the reasons on which it was founded.† His influence was thus increased by all the weight of reason, and he omit-

His strict
impartiality.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 33.

† Ibid. p. 68.

ted no precaution to give it the sanction of impartiality. The solicitations of those who presumed most on his favour, from the ties of kindred or familiar acquaintance, he received with such coldness, that they were carefully avoided by those who knew him best, and never by any one repeated. If the cause of his friends was tried before him, he gave them rigid justice ; if they sought preferment in the state, he did not obstruct their claims of merit ; but he would listen to no application where partiality might blind his judgment, or blemish his integrity. *

In that age, the eyes of mankind were more strongly dazzled than at present by the splendour of rank ; and a statesman was more likely to promote his views by attentions to the great. Yet, with Burleigh, the poor received equal measure with the wealthy, and had their suits as patiently heard, and as speedily determined. Each day in term, it was customary for him to receive from fifty to sixty petitions, all of which he commonly perused and weighed in the course of the evening or night, and was prepared to return an answer next morning, on his way to Westminster Hall. As soon as the petitioner mentioned his name, Burleigh found no difficulty in recollecting his business, and in delivering a reply. When at length

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 58.

confined to his bed by age and infirmities, and no longer able to attend at the courts, he directed that all petitions should be sent to him under seal ; and as all were opened in the order in which they arrived, and answers immediately dictated, the lowest petitioner received his reply with the same dispatch as the highest. *

Vigilance
and intelli-
gence.

The early and complete intelligence which Burleigh possessed with regard to secret transactions, both at home and abroad, was spoken of with wonder by his contemporaries, and enabled him to adopt the promptest measures for counteracting all hostile attempts. At a period when invasion from abroad, and conspiracy at home, agitated by artful intriguers, and desperate bigots, it was no season to await, in careless slumber, the developement of events : but while we admire the extent and happy effects of his intelligence, we must hesitate to applaud the methods by which it was occasionally procured, and consider them as excusable only from the necessity of his situation. Obligated to maintain a number of spies, to reward informers, and to bribe accomplices to betray their associates, he might be condemned for resorting to nefarious arts, had they not been indispensable to the public safety, at a period when assassinations were so common, and when the doctrines of mental reserva-

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 22, 23.

tion, and of keeping no faith with heretics, were general tenets among the enemies of government.

Burleigh, by adhering inflexibly to the rule of living within his means, escaped those pecuniary Private expenditure. embarrassments which often beset his less considerate colleagues. His income, considerable at an early age, became progressively increased by additional offices, and occasionally, by the mercantile adventures which in these days were usual among men of rank and fortune. It is a curious fact, that he invested large sums in the purchase of lead, for the purpose of re-sale.* Still he was exempt not only from corruption, but from selfishness; for an avaricious man would have made more by his offices in seven years than he made in forty; and the splendour of his expences was fully proportioned to his wealth and station.† So far, indeed, did he carry his disinterestedness, as never to raise his rents, nor displace his tenants. As the lands were let when he bought them, so they still remained; and some of his tenants continued to enjoy, for twenty pounds a-year, what might have been leased for two hundred.‡

The magnificence of his mode of life is to be Magnificence.

* Letter from Gilbert Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury, in Lodge, Vol. II. p. 211.

† Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 43.

‡ Ibid. p. 54, 55.

ascribed partly to policy, but more to the manners of the age, which, as we have seen in the case of the modest and unambitious More, made the expence of the great consist chiefly in a number of retainers. Burleigh had four places of residence, at each of which he maintained an establishment, his family and suite amounting to nearly a hundred persons. His domestic expences at his house in London were calculated at forty or fifty pounds a-week when he was present, and about thirty in his absence ; princely allowances, when we consider the value of money at that period. His stables cost him a thousand marks a-year ; his servants were remarked for the richness of their liveries. Retaining an appendage of ancient magnificence, which had now been given up, unless by a few noblemen of the first rank and fortune, he kept a regular table, with a certain number of covers for gentlemen, and two others for persons of inferior condition. These, always open, were served alike whether he was present or absent ; and in correspondence with this proud hospitality, he had around him many young persons of distinction, who acted as his retainers, and lived in his family. Promotion was not yet attainable by open competition ; the house of a minister was the grand preparatory school ; and Burleigh was under Elizabeth, what Cardinal Morton had been under Henry VII. Among the retainers of Burleigh, there could, we

are told, be reckoned, at one time, twenty young gentlemen, each of whom possessed, or was likely to possess, an income of a thousand pounds; and among his household officers, there were persons who had property to the amount of ten thousand pounds.* His houses were not large, but his equipage and furniture were splendid; his plate is reported to have amounted to fourteen thousand pounds in weight, and about forty thousand pounds in value. His public entertainments corresponded with this magnificence. It was customary for Elizabeth to receive sumptuous entertainments from her principal nobility and ministers; and, on these instances of condescension, Burleigh omitted nothing which could show his sense of the honour conferred on him by his royal guest. Besides the short private visits which she often paid him, he entertained her in a formal manner twelve different times, with festivities which lasted several weeks, and, on each occasion, cost him two or three thousand pounds. His seat at Theobald's, during her stay, exhibited a succession of plays, sports, and splendid devices; and here she received foreign ambassadors, at the expense of her treasurer, in as royal state as at any

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 40. The writer of the treatise from which these particulars are taken was himself one of Lord Burghley's retainers, and an eye-witness of all these circumstances

of her palaces. * This magnificence, doubtless, acquired him a considerable ascendancy both at court and among the people ; but it was attended with much envy, and often brought him vexation. At his death, he left, besides his plate and furniture, eleven thousand pounds in money, and four thousand pounds a-year in lands, of which he had received only a small portion by inheritance. †

Conduct of
Elizabeth
towards
him.

We come next to the interesting topic of his conduct towards Elizabeth, and the deportment of her majesty in return. He was often heard to say, that he thought there never was a woman so wise in all respects as Elizabeth ; that she knew the state of her own and foreign countries better than all her counsellors ; that, in the most difficult deliberations, she would surprise the wisest by the superiority of her expedients. ‡ His services, both before and after her elevation to the throne, were of the most important nature ; for, besides his great qualities as a minister, his vigilance had repeatedly preserved her life, while his fidelity had endangered his own.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 37, 38, 39, 40, 41. These protracted visits of Elizabeth to her principal courtiers seem to have had in view economy as well as popularity. She had no objection to honour her subjects by her presence, and she accounted it fair that they should pay for this honour.

† Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 44.

‡ Ibid. p. 71.

These services were sincerely felt by Elizabeth : with a magnanimity not always to be found among princes, she freely acknowledged her obligations, and demonstrated her gratitude by attentions which, from a sovereign, were the most flattering of rewards. Interesting herself in his domestic concerns, and entering into the joys and sorrows of his family, we find her at one time standing sponsor for one of his children, and at another hastening in person to inquire for his daughter in a sudden illness. In promoting the marriage of his son with a lady of rank and fortune, she also took an active part, and visited the lady in behalf of the suitor. Although extremely jealous of her real authority, Elizabeth had too much sense as well as policy to impede her service by unmeaning forms. When the treasurer, in the latter part of his life, was much afflicted with the gout, the queen always made him sit down in her presence with some obliging expression. " My Lord," she would say, " we make use of you, not for your bad legs, but for your good head." When the severity of his illness rendered him unable to quit his apartment, she repaired thither with her council to enjoy the benefit of his advice ; and when his disease assumed a dangerous aspect, she appeared in person among the anxious inquirers for his health. *

* Birch's Memoirs, Vol. I. p. 294, 138. Lloyd's State Worthies.

Her majesty was, however, far from being always so accommodating ; and it often required no small degree of patience to bear the effects of her violent passions and unreasonable caprice. The manners of that age were much less refined than those of the present ; yet, even then, it appeared no ordinary breach of decorum in a queen to load her attendants with the coarsest epithets, or to vent her indignation in blows. The style of gallantry with which she encouraged her courtiers to approach her, both cherished this overbearing temper, and made her excesses be received rather as the ill-humour of a mistress than the affronts of a sovereign. It was customary for her statesmen and warriors to pretend not only loyalty to her throne, but ardent attachment to her person ; and in some of Raleigh's letters, we find her addressed, at the age of sixty, with all the enthusiastic rapture of a fond lover. * To feign a dangerous distemper arising from the influence of her charms was deemed an effectual passport to her favour ; and when she appeared displeased, the forlorn courtier took to his bed in a paroxysm of amorous despondency, and breathed out his tender melancholy in sighs and protestations. We find Leicester, and some other ministers, endeavouring to introduce one Dyer to her favour ; and the means

* Cayley's *Life of Raleigh*, p. 127, 134. 4to edit.

which they employed was, to persuade her that a consumption, from which the young man had with difficulty recovered, was brought on by the despair with which she had inspired him. * Essex having, on one occasion, fallen under her displeasure, became exceedingly ill, and could be restored to health only by her sending him some broth, with kind wishes for his recovery. Raleigh, hearing of these attentions to his political rival, got sick in his turn, and received no benefit from any medicine till the same sovereign remedy was applied. With courtiers who submitted to act the part of sensitive admirers, Elizabeth found herself under no restraint : she expected from them the most unlimited compliance, and if they proved refractory, she gave herself up to all the fury of passion, and loaded them with opprobrious epithets.

Burleigh, by uniformly approaching her with the dignified demeanour of a grave and reserved counsellor, was far less liable to such indignities. Yet even on him she sometimes vented her chagrin ; and, in moments of sudden violence, seemed to forget his age, his character, and his station. On one occasion, when, in opposition to her wish, he persisted in a resolution to quit the court a few days for the benefit of his health, she petulantly

* Letter of Gilbert Talbot to the Earl of Shrewsbury, in Lodge, Vol. LI. p. 101.

called him a froward old fool : * and when he ventured, as already has been mentioned, to maintain some claim of the Earl of Essex, which she had determined to disallow, she wrathfully reproached him as a miscreant and a coward who deserted her cause. † As he had generally to perform the disagreeable task of announcing to her any untoward accidents in the course of her affairs, he was exposed to the first ebullitions of her chagrin ; and so much, we are told, did the unprosperous event of her plans for the tranquillization of Ireland, in 1594, irritate her mind, that she severely reproached her aged minister even while he laboured under sickness. ‡ But it was not only hasty bursts of passion that he had to dread : we have seen that, on particular occasions, she chose to execute her designs under a veil of consummate hypocrisy ; and made no scruple to shield herself from public reproach by affecting resentment against her ministers for the very acts which had given her the highest gratification. Fortunately for Burleigh, she found means to satisfy appearances, without carrying her injustice to him beyond some temporary indignities.

These mortifications were aggravated by the obstinacy with which she occasionally opposed his

* Birch's Memoirs of Queen Elizabeth, Vol. I. p. 448.

† Ibid. Vol. II. p. 148.

‡ Ibid. Vol. I. p. 169.

designs. While certain counsellors, from attractions of person and manner, acquired at times an undue influence over her; some of her passions and prejudices were too powerful to be counteracted by his cool and rational suggestions; and it is alleged, that she, more than once, rejected his counsels, merely to prove to him that his ascendancy over her was not absolute.

The even temper of Burleigh enabled him to suffer many of these disgusts with apparent calmness; yet at times they exceeded his endurance. A very few years after the accession of Elizabeth, we find him already desiring to quit a station, in which his toil and mortification were so great.* As he advanced in life, his increasing bodily infirmities, and some domestic misfortunes which affected him very deeply, made such causes of chagrin more poignant; and he frequently solicited the queen to accept of his resignation. But that princess, though too impetuous to refrain from giving offence, could not endure to be deprived of the zeal, industry, and wisdom, on which she had so long relied with the most prosperous issue; and his resignation was a theme to which she could never be brought to listen. Laying aside the stateliness of the queen, she undertook to alter his purpose and

Desirous
frequently
to resign.

* Letter in Hardwicke's Miscellaneous State Papers, Vol. I. p. 170.

dispel his chagrin, by assuming the playfulness of the woman. There still remain several of her letters, in which she so artfully mingles strokes of gratitude and attachment with raillery, that it is no wonder the old statesman should have been moved by these indications of warm interest from his sovereign.*

Private
life.

The private life of Burleigh may be discussed in a short compass. Hurried along, from an early period of life, amidst affairs too complicated not to require his utmost industry, too important not to engage all his attention; he had very little leisure for domestic enjoyments. His hours of relaxation were few, seldom exceeding what was necessary for the refreshment of nature; and if he at any time indulged in a greater cessation from his public labours, it was chiefly when his bodily infirmities demanded such an intermission, with a call not to be refused.

Recreations.

The principal scene of his amusements was his seat at Theobald's, near London, whither he fled with eagerness to enjoy the short intervals of leisure which he could snatch from public affairs. In these days the buildings had not extended so far; the house was surrounded with gardens, on which he had expended large sums of money, which were laid out under his own direction, with taste and

* Strype's Annals, Vol. IV. p. 77.

magnificence. Here he was often seen riding up and down the walks on his mule, enjoying the progress of his improvements, or overlooking those who amused themselves by shooting with arrows, or playing at bowls; but he never joined in these or any other diversions. The weakness of his constitution, and more especially the distempers of his feet and legs, disqualified him for active sports, even if he had been led to them by inclination: but his mind seems to have been so thoroughly engrossed by important business, that he had as little relish as leisure for amusements; nor did he play at any of those games with which the less busy endeavour to relieve the languor of existence.*

His principal and favourite recreation was reading. Books were to him what cards are to a great portion of the world; his frequent and most valued resource. They frequently interfered with the exercise necessary to his health; for when he got home to take a morning's ride, if he found a book which pleased him, he willingly postponed his excursion.† Nor was he insensible to the pleasures of

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 61.

† Ibid. p. 63, 64. It is curious to hear the peevishness with which learning is often cried down, even by those who derive from it the principal pleasures of their life. Though Burleigh found nearly all his recreation in books, in a letter to the Earl of Shrewsbury, he wishes that nobleman's son "all the good education that may be mete to teach him to fear God, love his natural father, and

domestic society and exhilarating conversation. At his table, in the company of a few select friends, or of his children and kinsmen, whom he always loved to see around him, he appeared to throw all his cares aside, and to yield himself up to unrestrained enjoyment. Whatever fatigue or anxiety, in the course of the day, his mind might have experienced from the pressure of public affairs, every uneasy circumstance seemed, at these periods, to be forgotten. His countenance was cheerful, his conversation lively; and those, who saw him only in these short intervals of relaxation, would have imagined that pleasure was the business of his life. As the mildness of his demeanour towards all ranks, in the intercourse of public life, procured him many friends; the frankness and familiarity which he displayed in his private circle gave a relish to his society. His conversation often sparkled with wit and gaiety, and his observations were generally not less pleasant than shrewd. The topics discussed at his table were various; literary conversation was preferred, politics were always avoided. * The magnificent style in which he lived, the number of his attendants, and the concourse of persons of distinc-

to know his friends; *without any curiosity of human learning, which, without the fear of God, doth great hurt to all youth in this time and age.*" Lodge, Vol. II. p. 133.

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 62, 63.

tion, seem, at first, adverse to the freedom of his social entertainments. But Burleigh was accustomed to live in a crowd; and few of his visitors were so exalted above him by rank, that he could not with grace relax himself in their presence.

A share in conversation was the chief pleasure ^{Temperance.} which he enjoyed at table; for he was distinguished for temperance in an age when that virtue was not common. He ate sparingly, partook of few dishes, never drank above thrice at a meal, and very seldom of wine. Although the dinner hour in that age was not later than twelve or one o'clock, it was not uncommon with him to refrain from supper. * The gout, with which he was grievously tormented in the latter part of his life, probably contributed to render him more cautiously abstemious; if his temperance failed to banish this uneasy guest, he never at least encouraged its stay by rich wines and strong spices. †

Nor was the private life of Burleigh destitute of ^{Charity.} nobler virtues. At a period when the poor had so few resources for their industry, and when many, willing to work, were reduced to want, a portion of his ample fortune was benevolently appropriated to their necessities. His certain and regular alms amounted to five hundred pounds a-year, besides

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 62, 63.

† Nuge Antiquæ, Vol. II. p. 82.

farther and large disbursements on extraordinary occasions. Part was employed, under proper superintendence, in affording relief to poor prisoners, or in releasing honest debtors; the rest was confided to the management of certain parishes for the use of their most destitute inhabitants. From the low state of husbandry at that period, and the very limited intercourse between nations, one bad season was sufficient to subject a kingdom to the miseries of famine; corn, in certain districts, was sold at the most exorbitant prices, and rendered as inaccessible to the poorer classes, as if none had existed in the country. In such times of scarcity, then of frequent occurrence, and attended with consequences revolting to humanity, it was usual for Burleigh to buy up large quantities of corn, which he sold at low prices to the poor in the neighbourhood of his different seats; and by this well-judged assistance, relieved their necessities, without relaxing their industry. *

Piety.

The mind of Burleigh appears to have been strongly tinctured with piety. Placed amidst dangers which his utmost vigilance could not always avoid, and from which he often escaped by unexpected accidents, his views were naturally extended to that power on whose will depended the dura-

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 38, 42.

tion of his life. His faith had been endeared to him by persecution; his piety was exalted by the sacrifice of his interest to religion. Regular in his attendance on public worship, and in the performance of his private devotions; he strove, both by example and influence, to inspire his family and connections with religious sentiments. During the greatest pressure of business, it was his custom, morning and evening, to attend prayers at the queen's chapel. When his increasing infirmities rendered him no longer able to go abroad, he caused a cushion to be laid by his bedside, and, on his knees, performed his devotions at the same regular hours. Unable at length to kneel, or to endure the fatigue of reading, he caused the prayers to be read aloud to him as he lay on his bed. * "I will trust," he said, "no man if he be not of sound religion, for he that is false to God can never be true to man."† The strictness of his morals was in correspondence with his piety, and both had a powerful effect in confirming his fortitude in times of peril. At the awful period when Philip was preparing his Armada, and when the utter destruction of the English government was confidently expected abroad, and greatly dreaded at home, Burleigh was uniformly collected and resolute; and when the mighty preparations of the Spaniards were spoken of in his

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 56.

† Ibid. p. 68.

presence with apprehension, he replied with firmness, " they shall do no more than God will suffer them." *

Behaviour to
his family
and depend-
ents.

In his intercourse with his family and dependents, this grave statesman was kind and condescending. In his leisure moments he delighted in sporting with his children, forbearing, however, such indications of intemperate fondness as might have rendered them regardless of his authority, and ready to give the rein to their caprices. In his old age no scene so much delighted him as to have his children, grand-children, and great-grand-children, collected around his table, and testifying their happiness by their good humour and cheerfulness. † While his eldest son passed into the rank of hereditary nobility, it was to his second son, Robert, that Burleigh turned an anxious eye as the heir of his talents and influence. Nor were his pains fruitlessly bestowed : ‡ Robert displayed abilities worthy of his father ; and after rising, during his lifetime, to considerable trusts and employments in the state, succeeded him, under James I. as prime minister, under the title of Earl of Salisbury. The care with which Burleigh watched over the interests of this son appears from a

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 30.

† Ibid. p. 60, 61.

‡ Bacon's Works, Vol. I. p. 376.

series of prudential advices, arranged in ten divisions, which he drew-up for his use. *

For the improvement of his children, as well as for his own domestic happiness, Burleigh was chiefly indebted to his wife, the daughter of Sir Anthony Cook, a lady highly distinguished for her mental accomplishments. The plan of female education, which the example of Sir Thomas More had rendered popular, continued to be pursued among the superior classes of the community. The learned languages, which, in the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign, still contained every thing elegant in literature, formed an indispensable branch of a fashionable education ; and many young ladies of rank could not only translate the authors of Greece and Rome, but even compose in Greek and Latin with considerable elegance. Sir Anthony Cook, a man eminent for his literary acquirements, and on that account appointed tutor to Edward the Sixth, bestowed the most careful education on his five daughters ; and all of them rewarded his exertions by becoming not only proficient in literature, but distinguished for their excellent demeanour as mothers of families. Lady Burleigh was adorned with every quality which could excite

* This tract has been transmitted to posterity ; and as it affords so many characteristic traits of its author, it is inserted for the information and entertainment of the reader in Appendix V.

love and esteem ; and many instances are recorded of her piety and beneficence. She had accompanied her husband through all the vicissitudes of his fortunes ; and an affectionate union of forty-three years rendered the loss of her the severest calamity of his life. The despondency caused to him by this irreparable calamity, produced a desire to renounce public business, so irksome in that state of his feelings, and to devote the remainder of his life to retirement and meditation. But Elizabeth was too sensible of the vast importance of his counsels. She peremptorily rejected the resignation which he tendered, yet softened her refusal with those arts which she knew so well to employ.

Unhappiness
of his latter
years.

But though Burleigh continued to apply himself with undiminished vigour to public business, his happiness had sustained a loss which nothing could repair. In his wife he had been deprived of a companion whose society long habit had rendered essential to his enjoyment ; while the increasing severity of the gout, with other infirmities of age, aggravated the distress of his mind by the pains of his body. By no trait had he hitherto been more remarkable, than by the unruffled calmness of his temper. The serenity of his countenance seemed to indicate a tranquillity so confirmed, as to be incapable of interruption ; and an eye-witness informs us that, for thirty years together, he was

seldom seen moved with joy in prosperity, or with sorrow in adversity. * But in the latter years of his life, this consummate self-command began to forsake him. Business became more irksome as strength decreased, and the success with which his antagonists thwarted his pacific counsels gave him infinite pain, as they seemed likely to undo all the national advantages which it had been the labour of his life to procure. His temper now became so unfortunately altered, that he, who had been so eminent for coolness, sometimes gave way to passion, in opposition to every dictate of discretion. † In a conversation with M. Fouquerolles, an envoy from Henry the Fourth, something which occurred so transported him with passion, that he broke out into the most vehement invectives against that monarch. ‡ His intercourse with his servants, which had been uniformly placid and cheerful, was now frequently interrupted by sudden bursts of peevishness : but on such occasions, he immediately recollected himself; appeared sensible of the injustice of injuring those who could not retaliate ; and endeavoured, by assuming a peculiar complacency in his words and looks, or by studiously devising some acts of kindness, to make re-

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 43.

† Birch's Memoirs, Vol. I. p. 165.

‡ Ibid. Vol. II. p. 326.

paration for the pain which he had unadvisedly caused.*

Decay.

Various indications of declining health now began to assail the aged statesman. Still he continued assiduous at his post, and laboured to rescue his countrymen from those delusive hopes of military glory and plunder, in pursuit of which they threatened to exhaust all their solid resources. The last public measure which he accomplished was the conclusion of an advantageous treaty with Holland : and he closed his long and useful labours in the council with an earnest but ineffectual effort to persuade them to negotiate with Spain. He died on the 4th of August 1598, in the seventy-eighth year of his age, having held the station of prime-minister of England for the long period of forty years, and assisted in the conduct of public affairs for upwards of half a century. His death-bed was surrounded by friends whom he esteemed, by children for whose future welfare he had provided, by servants devoted to him from a long interchange of good offices ; and he expired with the utmost serenity and composure.†

Death.

The death of Burleigh was a cause of general sorrow. Elizabeth deeply lamented the loss of a minister in whose exertions she had found securi-

* Life of William Lord Burghley, p. 49.

† Ibid. p. 63.

ty and success during her whole reign: and the clouds which overhung the close of her career must often have renewed her regret for the want of her wise and faithful counsellor. A minister who opposes the multitude in the pursuit of an object on which their heated imaginations have fixed, is sure, at the moment, to be exposed to reproach. Such was the situation of Burleigh at the period of his death. In the face of popular clamour, he continued to deprecate a war which was no longer necessary for the public safety, and which wasted the wealth of the nation to gratify the pride or avarice of individuals. The Earl of Essex, who still stood at the head of his antagonists, was the idol of the people; and they fondly contrasted the high spirit, the love of glory, the courageous sentiments of this young nobleman, with what they termed the cold, cautious, illiberal policy of the aged Burleigh. Yet his death caused more regret than satisfaction, even among the unthinking multitude. They felt themselves deprived of a guardian, under whose vigilant protection they had long reposed and prospered; and there remained no statesman of equal experience to guide their affairs, at a time when the decay of Elizabeth, and a disputed succession, threatened the nation with many calamities. The lapse of time has long since removed those circumstances which elevated the

hopes and inflamed the passions of his contemporaries; the merits of Burleigh have been more justly estimated; and posterity seems to concur in recognizing him as the wisest minister of England.

APPENDIX.

1890. 1891. 1892.

1893. 1894. 1895.

1896. 1897. 1898.

1899. 1900. 1901.

1902. 1903. 1904.

1905. 1906. 1907.

1908. 1909. 1910.

1911. 1912. 1913.

1914. 1915. 1916.

1917. 1918. 1919.

1920. 1921. 1922.

1923. 1924. 1925.

1926. 1927. 1928.

1929. 1930. 1931.

1932. 1933. 1934.

1935. 1936. 1937.

1938. 1939. 1940.

1941. 1942. 1943.

1944. 1945. 1946.

APPENDIX I.

THE UTOPIA.

THE substance of the fable is as follows. More, having, on a particular occasion, visited the Low Countries, happened to pass some time at Antwerp, where he enjoyed the company of his friend Petrus Ægidius, a man equally distinguished for the urbanity of his manners and the depth of his erudition. Ægidius, desirous to provide a rich banquet for the curiosity of his friend, introduced to him, at a fit opportunity, a person whose appearance was rendered remarkable by the length of his beard, his dusky and weather-beaten countenance, and the careless manner in which his cloak hung from his shoulder. This stranger was discovered to be no other than the celebrated traveller Raphael Hythlodæus, who had accompanied Americus Vesputius in all his voyages to the new world; and, at his own earnest request, had been permitted to make one of the twenty-four, whom, at the conclusion of his fourth voyage, Americus there left behind him. More, inexpressibly delighted with his new acquaintance, listened with eager attention, while he recounted the adventures of himself and five of his companions, who had quitted the country where they had been left by Americus, and traversed still more distant and unknown regions. At

first, while their journey lay within the tropics, they found themselves surrounded by vast and dreary deserts, where vegetation had almost lost its power, from the excessive heat of the sun ; where the only inhabitants were wild beasts and serpents, or men scarcely less fierce or less dangerous. But as they proceeded farther in their journey, nature gradually began to assume a milder aspect : the heat became less intense, the earth was covered with a fresher green, the animals seemed more harmless and gentle ; till at length the appearance of cultivated fields, of villages, cities, ships busily employed in commerce, proved that they were now arrived among nations, who approached in civilization to those of Europe. The account of the manners and customs of these nations, so unexpectedly found in a state of high improvement, afforded peculiar gratification to More ; and the institutions of one people in particular, the Utopians, so forcibly attracted his admiration, that the desire of imparting some account of them to the public could not be resisted.

Such is the introduction to the history of the Utopians : next follows a more particular description of this remarkable people. More, struck with the wonderful sagacity of the stranger, and his profound acquaintance with men and manners, could not help expressing his regret, that acquirements so rare and so well calculated to benefit mankind, should not be displayed at the court of some great prince, and applied to promote the welfare of nations. Hythlodæus argues the point with his new acquaintance ; and shows him the folly of expecting that a man, at once very wise and very honest, should acquire any sway in the councils of a monarch, surrounded, as he usually is, by sycophants who, for their own private ends, always give the advice which humours his ruling passion, however pernicious to himself, or destructive to his people. In the course of this discussion, the abject servility of courtiers, the bad education of princes, the absurd

and ruinous ideas of unlimited prerogative instilled into their minds by interested flattery, are placed in a striking point of view, and undergo a severe and merited chastisement. While the doctrines, that a prince cannot be guilty of injustice, that all the possessions, and even all the persons of his subjects are his, and that they are entitled only to what is left them by his good pleasure, are represented by Hythlodæus, as the base adulation of parasites, and a full apology for every crime : we find him advancing, as the dictates of wisdom and honesty, that princes are appointed solely for the benefit of the people, for the better regulation of their affairs, and their more complete protection from injuries ; that monarchs ought to look on themselves as shepherds, entrusted with the care of a flock, for whose wants and security it is their first and sovereign duty to provide. Surprising doctrines ! when we consider the age in which they were uttered, and the tenets which prevailed a century afterwards.

Nor is it against princes and their minions alone that this free satire is pointed. In England, (for Hythlodæus had also visited England,) the traveller takes occasion to notice “ the crowd of nobles, who waste their existence in idleness, feeding like drones on the labour of others, and (with an avarice no less mean than their prodigality is unbounded) fleecing their wretched tenants to procure the means of profligate dissipation. As if such things were not sufficiently pernicious, continued he, these personages carry about with them an immense multitude of idle attendants, who, having never learnt any honest means of earning a livelihood, must, when no longer useful for show, increase the burdens of the nation, by adding to its beggars.” The monks and priests also, in their turn, pass the ordeal of his satire, and sustain the severe raillery repeatedly directed against their hypocrisy, their licentiousness, and their avarice.

But the ridicule of Hythlodæus is not confined to particu-

lar classes ; he frequently exposes the absurdity of opinions then generally held in reverence, and discloses the defects of institutions, which, from the indolence, rather than the conviction of succeeding generations, remain to this day unaltered. He attacks, by convincing arguments, the severity of the English criminal code ; and more particularly the absurdity, as well as the iniquity, of those laws, which affix a capital punishment to the most trivial thefts. " Nothing," he observes, " can be more pernicious, than to blend together crimes of the most unequal magnitude, and confound the guilt of the thief with that of the murderer, by sentencing both to the same punishment. When the highwayman perceives that the same fate awaits him, if convicted of robbery, as if he had also added murder to his guilt, he has here a powerful incitement to provide more effectually for his own safety, by destroying the witness of his crime."

But the principal scope of all these examples and reasonings is to show how vain it is to oppose arguments to prejudice ; how difficult to wean mankind from a blind reverence for the most pernicious institutions, when sanctioned by time, and rendered familiar by habit. To those, in particular, who are placed in the most exalted stations, and entrusted with the management of public affairs, it is observed, that every proposal of improvement is peculiarly ungracious. It seems an insult on their sagacity, that others should presume to discover what had escaped themselves ; and to maintain the pretensions of their own vanity, appears an object of infinitely greater importance than to produce essential advantages to their country. " Among the counsellors of a prince," says Hythlodæus, " there is no one, who is not either in reality, or at least in his own opinion, so knowing as to have no need of advice from others. Yet, in cherishing their own darling opinions, these men only act a very natural part ; the crow is pleased with her own brood, and the ape

delighted with her chattering progeny. But if any man is so idle as to propose, to persons thus wrapped up in their own conceit, some improvement which he has drawn from the examples presented by history, or from his observations on the practice of foreign countries, their vanity at once takes the alarm. They imagine that their own reputation for wisdom is in the utmost danger, and can be preserved only by discovering that the proposed improvement is futile or impracticable. If no other reason occurs for rejecting it, they fly to their never-failing resource, "that the existing institutions satisfied their forefathers, and it were good for the present generation to be as wise as them; and, having uttered this amiable maxim, it is amazing with what self-complacence they look down on their importunate adviser."

During his stay in England, Hythlodæus had an opportunity of experiencing both the facility with which mankind acquiesce in their existing institutions, however evidently pernicious, and the carelessness with which they reject the most palpable improvements. In a company of learned and grave persons, where he happened to be present, a lawyer contrived to thrust into the conversation a long panegyric on the laws of England, and more especially on that rigid justice that was exercised against thieves; he could not, however, help at the same time expressing his surprise, that although twenty were frequently suspended together on the same gibbet, and so very few suffered to escape, yet neither the numbers nor audacity of the depredators seemed anywise diminished. Hythlodæus, in reply, maintained that, if there are multitudes who cannot otherwise procure the necessaries of life, it is vain to expect the suppression of theft and robbery from the severest punishments; he recounted various private customs and public institutions, by which numbers of the English common people were gradually led to this unhappy fate: he showed, besides, that excessive pu-

nishments are both unjust and impolitic, that they tend to confound, in the ideas of men, great crimes with small, and to render them as little scrupulous of committing the one as the other. Having, by these and many other arguments, demonstrated the impolicy of affixing such cruel punishments to dishonesty, he described the institutions which he had observed in a certain country of Persia, where the laws dealt with this crime in a very mild manner, and yet proved remarkably efficacious for its prevention. "And why," added he, "might not such institutions be substituted in England, for those which experience has proved to be inadequate to their object?"—"No," replied the lawyer, "such institutions can never be adopted in this kingdom, without bringing the state into the most imminent danger:"—and, having thus unanswerably refuted his antagonist, he shook his head, drew up his lip, and enjoyed his triumph in silence. The whole company acknowledged the irresistible force of his argument, and declared themselves of his opinion.

In this manner does More proceed, throughout his first book, exposing the vices of political institutions, ridiculing the pertinacious prejudices of the people, and thus preparing the way for the reception of his own projected improvements. Hythlodæus afterwards relates to his impatient hearers the institutions of the wonderful islanders.

The fundamental principle of the Utopian constitution is the community of goods. The island is divided into a number of cities, to each of which a district of the adjacent country is assigned. The inhabitants of each division share every thing in common, their labour as well as the fruits of their labour. While the magistrates, as a special part of their duty, take care that every citizen, both male and female, shall perform a certain portion of work, a plentiful supply of all necessaries is produced with very moderate exertion; and as no one is allowed to remain idle, so no one is depressed or

exhausted by excessive toil. As the cultivation of the fields, the building and repairing of houses, the food and clothing of the people, are all regulated and directed by the magistrate, under his vigilant superintendence, all useless waste of labour, all the bad effects of private negligence and luxury, are avoided.

Such are the principles on which the legislator of Utopia erects a political system, which, however beautiful, must be feeble and unsteady, since placed on so vain a foundation. Had he studied the laws of human nature, instead of pursuing the devious tract of his fancy, (a tract which, unfortunately, succeeding political speculators have, for the most part, preferred,) he would have discovered that every individual, being most intimately acquainted with his own feelings and wants, and most urgently stimulated by his own desires, is every way best qualified to undertake the care of his own enjoyments. He would have found, that nothing can be more hopeless than the attempt to reduce to uniformity the feelings and desires of a whole society; and nothing more oppressive, than to be perpetually thwarted or goaded by even the most wise and virtuous magistrate. He would, in short, have been convinced, that while every individual, stimulated by necessity, by ambition, by affection, pursues, without any restraint but what the safety of others requires, those plans to which he is led by his own private views;—the opulence, the comfort, the knowledge, the general prosperity of the whole community, will attain the greatest perfection to which man, in his present state, can presume to aspire.

To maintain a complete community of goods, and to destroy every idea of private property, the Utopians are obliged to have recourse to many remarkable institutions. Like the Lacedæmonians, they eat their meals in public, and, with a refinement which escaped Lycurgus, they, every ten years,

exchange their houses by lot. Nor is it found a less difficult task to prevent the indolent from avoiding their just share of the common labour. As the cultivation of the fields, their principal and most toilsome occupation, does not require the exertions of all, a certain number is, every two years, sent from the cities to carry on the agriculture, and at the end of that period, is regularly replaced by another equal portion. Public superintendents take care that every person shall employ a prescribed part of each day in some useful occupation; and when any one obtains a licence to travel from one city to another, he can procure neither food nor lodging, until he has executed the daily task in the place where he sojourns. As the use of money would be superfluous, where all are equally entitled to share in the public produce, and where a certain portion of labour is the universal price, it is there entirely unknown. Nor are the precious metals debarred only from circulating in the form of coin; to render them an object of general contempt and aversion, they are applied to the meanest and most degrading uses, as ornaments for slaves, and chains for malefactors.

In the present age, when the nature of wealth and the use of money are more distinctly understood, we cannot but smile at the self-complacency of the legislator, while, triumphing in the excellence of this regulation, he imagines that he has thus torn up avarice by the roots, and along with it a long catalogue of the blackest crimes, as if substitutes could not be found for gold, or the objects of inordinate avarice were confined to the precious metals. But, notwithstanding these, and various other defects, which tarnish the institutions of the Utopians, the book is interesting, as many of the regulations present a very pleasing, though not practicable endeavour at perfection. The people of each city, divided into a certain number of families or households, elect the magistrates, who, in their turn, nominate their

prince, or president, from among four candidates selected by the people. This chief magistrate is appointed for life; the rest hold office by annual election. The affairs of state are transacted by the senate, unless on occasions of peculiar difficulty, when they are referred to the general council of the island. Every precaution is taken to prevent abuses on the part of the magistrates, yet the most complete submission is paid to their decisions, and any resistance to the laws would immediately be followed by the severest punishment.

In their religious, as well as their civil institutions, the same guarded respect is paid to the general feelings. As it is impossible that the opinions of a whole people, in regard to the abstruse and intricate questions of theology, should be reduced to an exact uniformity, every allowance is made for that difference in religious tenets which must naturally take place. While every one is allowed to believe, without inquiry or molestation, whatever is approved by his own understanding, he is not only prevented from employing either insult or injury toward those of an opposite creed, but even from attempting, by any other means than the most gentle persuasion, to make proselytes. Utopia abounds in sectaries, who openly profess the most opposite tenets; yet a national worship has been devised, in which even the most bigoted never refuse to join. Although some might introduce images into their rites, and some pay adoration to the spirits of departed saints, or to a plurality of gods, while others looked on these practices as the dictates of abject superstition, yet, as they all with one voice acknowledged the existence of one Supreme Being, the Lord of lords, and Sovereign Director of all things, a point was afforded, in which the general worship might, without violence, centre. While every one is permitted, in private, to exercise, without restraint, the rites most conformable to his own belief, all adoration in the public temples is offered up to that one Supreme

Being, whose attributes all equally acknowledge, and whose protection all equally desire.

The sagacity of the Utopians cannot be sufficiently applauded, for connecting together so intimately the ideas of virtue and industry, of idleness and vice. And, although the regulations adopted by their legislator, to retain all his people in continual activity, are often fanciful, and perhaps impracticable, yet it must be acknowledged, that the object he had in view is essentially connected with the improvement and happiness of mankind. The vast advantages which have resulted to the reformed countries of modern Europe, from the dispersion of those hives of idle ecclesiastics who swarmed in the convents and cathedrals, demonstrate the wisdom of the Utopians, in having but a very small number of priests, yet all distinguished for their learning, and venerated for their virtue. They justly supposed, that the number of persons who could be found thus qualified, even in a whole nation, was very limited. It had also never entered into the minds of these islanders to set apart a class of hereditary nobles, who should succeed, without any exertion on their part, to the reward due only to public services; who (like many of the English nobility in the days of More) should, with their numerous retainers, form such a lamentable addition to the idleness and profligacy of the community. Their only nobility is the class of the learned, consisting of persons selected from among the people at large, for the apparent superiority of their talents and acquirements, and permitted to devote their time to the cultivation of their minds, in the conviction that they may thus contribute more effectually to the public advantage, than by directing their activity to servile labour. From among this class, which comprehends the most distinguished talents, and the most valuable accomplishments of the community,

the magistrates and ambassadors, the prince and priests, are selected.

In nothing are the Utopians more strikingly superior to other nations, than in the extreme readiness and candour with which they give a full consideration to every improvement, whether devised by one of themselves, or imported from foreign countries. Having, from the imperfect suggestions of Hythlodæus and his companions, collected some rude idea of the nature and utility of printing, this useful art was immediately carried into practice, with a success equal to their ardour. The reception which they gave to the Christian religion, even from these rude missionaries, was conformable to their accustomed candour; and a fair comparison of its tenets, with the religious opinions hitherto known among them, was sufficient, with the better informed, for their conversion.

Contented with their own happy island, and convinced that an extension of territory would, in fact, produce weakness, with an appearance of greater strength, like those luxurious repasts which inflate the muscles, while they undermine the health, the Utopians carry on no wars of conquest. To repel the aggressions of an enemy, to relieve some unfortunate neighbour from external violence, or domestic oppression, are, with them, the only causes of war. The triumphs of victory form, in their eyes, a poor compensation for the destruction and misery by which they must ever be purchased, and nothing appears to them so unworthy of its name as military glory. Yet, while thus attached to peace, they well know that it can be maintained only by being ever prepared for war. Military exercises, therefore, form a necessary part of education with the young, and are not neglected even by those of more mature years. Military stores being in constant readiness, their army, on the first alarm, is prepared to carry the war beyond the bounds of

their own territories. The ideas which they entertain of the relations of peace are no less singular. As they never, without due provocation, commence a war, so they never enter into a treaty of peace. A solemn engagement between two nations, not to commit mutual violence, appears to them no less unnecessary, and unworthy of human nature, than a formal compact between two neighbours not to rob or assassinate each other. To live in peace and harmony is so evidently the interest of nations as of individuals, that they consider it our natural bent; and conclude, with an opinion abundantly justified by experience, that the evil passions which would counteract these intentions of nature, will not be restrained by the forms of a treaty.



The other works of More, besides his fragment of a History of England, are almost all religious, and chiefly controversial. He has, indeed, left a considerable number of Latin epigrams, partly translated from the Greek, and partly original; but they are not in general written with that point and elegance which we might have expected from such a wit and scholar. They appear the careless effusions of the moment, and probably of his younger years.

His other writings in Latin were,

1. A Reply to Luther's Answer to Henry VIII. This performance, very witty, but equally scurrilous, he did not chuse to give to the world under his own name, but adopted the fictitious one of *Gulielmus Rosicus*.
2. A Reply to an Epistle of Joannes Pomeranus, a follower of Luther.
3. A Treatise on the Passion of Christ, which he wrote in the Tower. It was afterwards translated into English by his niece, Mrs Basset.

His English writings were,

1. His Dialogues, which were chiefly intended to expose the errors in Tindal's translation of the Bible.
2. Answers to Tindal, Barnes, &c. &c.
3. The Supplication of Souls, in answer to the Supplication of Beggars.
4. Answer to Salem and Bizanze.
5. Three books, concerning Comfort and Tribulation : A Treatise on the Sacrament : A Treatise on the Passion. These were all written in the Tower.

Many of his letters, the most valuable part of his works, are preserved ; and many are to be found scattered in collections of the letters of Erasmus.

APPENDIX II.

*The following Letter, concerning the Education of his Family,
More wrote to Mr Gunnel, their domestic Tutor.*

“ I HAVE received your letters, my dear Gunnel, such as I have always found them, most elegant and full of affection. Your regard to my children I perceive from your letters, your diligence from theirs; every one of the last filled me with increased satisfaction. But what gave me most unfeigned pleasure was, to learn that Elizabeth had maintained, in her mother's absence, that modest and respectful behaviour, which few do when their mothers are present. Tell her that this conduct is more gratifying to me than the possession of all the learning in the world. For as I prefer learning, united with virtue, to all the treasures of princes, so I look on the reputation of learning, when separated from good morals, as merely infamy rendered notorious and conspicuous. This more especially is the case in regard to women, whose knowledge, as a novelty, and a reproach on the indolence of men, the world is eager to attack, and to lay on letters the vices of their disposition; imagining that from the faults of the more learned, their own ignorance will pass for virtue. But if, on the other hand, any woman should unite even a moderate portion of learning to eminent mental virtues, (which, under your direction, I trust all my girls

will do,) I reckon her to have made a greater acquisition of real good, than if she had joined the riches of Croesus with the beauty of Helen. Not on account of the reputation which will thus be gained, (though that also will accompany virtue, as the shadow does the body,) but because the solid rewards of wisdom can neither be taken away like riches, nor decay like beauty. It depends upon the rectitude of one's own conscience, and not on the breath of others, the most precarious and dangerous of supports. For as it is a characteristic of a good man to avoid infamy, so to seek only for fame is not only an indication of vanity, but subjects a man to ridicule and wretchedness. He must have a troubled soul, indeed, who is elevated with joy, or depressed with grief, according as the opinion of mankind happens to fluctuate. There is no greater benefit, in my opinion, derived from learning, than that inestimable lesson which it teaches, to regard, in the pursuit of literature, not its applause but its utility. Although some pretenders have abused learning, as well as other good things, as merely the means of acquiring applause, yet the most learned men, those philosophers who have pointed out the wisest rules of human life, have ever taught more salutary precepts.

“ I have dwelt at greater length on the impropriety of directing the mind to applause, because, my dear Gunnel, you have, in your letter, declared it as your opinion, that the lofty and aspiring genius of my Margaret ought not to be curbed. In this judgment I entirely agree; and I trust you will also allow, with me, that a habit of fixing the mind on vain and meaner ends, depresses and degrades a generous and noble disposition; while, on the other hand, that mind is exalted which aspires to virtue and to real good, neglecting those shadows which men usually mistake for solid benefits. It is from a conviction of these truths, my dear Gunnel, that I have entreated not only you, who I knew would

voluntarily second my aims, from your tender regard to all my children; that I have not only entreated my wife, whose maternal tenderness sufficiently impels her to the most earnest endeavours; but that I have also entreated all my friends to take every opportunity of warning my children to avoid the precipices of pride and vanity, and walk in the smooth and level paths of modesty; to look without emotion on the glare of gold; and not to sigh for those things which they falsely admired in another. I have entreated my friends to admonish them that they should not value themselves more, when possessed of beauty; nor less, when deprived of it: that they should not, through negligence, deface the comeliness which nature may have given them, nor endeavour to increase it by improper arts: that they should account virtue the first good, and learning the second: that from learning they ought to derive its most sublime lessons, piety towards God, benevolence towards all men, modesty of the heart, and Christian humility. By such a conduct it is, that they will secure to themselves, from God, the rewards of an innocent life; in the certain expectation of which, they will not be afraid of death; and being possessed of a solid source of pleasure, will neither be buoyed up with empty applauses, nor cast down by unjust reproaches. These I look on as the true and genuine fruits of learning; and, as I acknowledge that all the learned do not obtain them, so I maintain that those who begin to study with this intention, may easily obtain this happy issue.

“Nor do I think that it affects the harvest, that a man or woman has sown the seed. If they are worthy of being ranked with the human race, if, they are distinguished by reason from the beasts; that learning, by which the reason is cultivated, is equally suitable to both. Both of them, if the seed of good principles be sown in them, equally produce the germs of virtue. But if the female soil be in its

nature stubborn, and more productive of weeds than fruit, (an opinion which has often been employed to deter women from literature;) it ought, in my opinion, to be the more diligently cultivated with learning and good instruction, to correct by industry the defects of nature. These were the opinions of the most wise and virtuous men of antiquity. To omit others, I shall only mention the venerated names of Jerome and Augustine, who not only exhorted the most illustrious matrons and the most admired virgins to apply themselves to learning, but also assisted their progress, by diligently explaining to them the most abstruse parts of the scripture; and wrote to young women letters so full of erudition, as to be barely intelligible to many men who profess themselves extremely erudite. My dear Gunnel, make my daughters acquainted with the works of these excellent men; and from hence they will learn what end they ought to propose from their learning; and how wholly they ought to look for its fruits in a good conscience, and the approval of heaven. Thus, internally happy and tranquil, they will neither be moved by the praise of flatterers, nor chagrined by the ignorant scoffers at learning.

“ But I hear you reply, that although all these maxims may be true, yet they are beyond the capacity of my young scholars; since few, indeed, of a more advanced age, can wholly resist the ticklings of vanity. But, my Gunnel, the more difficult it is to get rid of this distemper of pride, the greater ought our correcting efforts to be from the earliest stages of life. Nor can I attribute the extreme obstinacy with which this vice adheres to our breasts, to any other cause than that, almost from the time we are born, it is implanted by nurses, in the tender minds of children, cherished by teachers, fostered and matured by parents; while every one instructs the pupil to expect praise as the proper reward of every good action. Thus being long accustomed to

look with high estimation on applause, it happens, at length, that while they endeavour to gain the approbation of the greater number, who are always the worst, they become ashamed to be good. To keep off this contagion from my children, let me entreat you, and their mother, and all my friends, continually to expose the folly and despicable nature of vanity: and, on the other hand, to represent that nothing is more noble than that humble modesty so often inculcated by Christ. This lesson ought to be impressed on their minds rather by teaching them virtue, than reproaching them with their faults, and thus inducing them to love and not hate those who give them wholesome counsel. It might be extremely useful, for that purpose, to put into their hands the precepts of some ancient Fathers on this subject; they are monitors who cannot be suspected of passion, and who must derive much authority from their sacred character. If their lessons in Sallust do not occupy their whole time, you will add to the many other obligations I owe you, by reading something of this sort with my Margaret and Elizabeth; for John and Cecil are not, perhaps, far enough advanced. By this means you will render my children, who are dear to me by nature, and dearer by learning and virtue, still more dear by an increase of knowledge and good morals."

The following Letters were written by More to his Children, while he was absent from them at Court.

" Thomas More to his whole School.

" You see what a device I have found to save paper, and avoid the labour of writing all your names. But, although you are all so dear to me, that if I had named one, I must have named all the rest, yet there is no appellation under which you appear dearer to me than that of scholar. The tie of learning seems almost to bind me to

you more powerfully than even the tie of nature. I am glad, therefore, that Mr Drue is again safely returned to you, as you know I had some reason to be anxious about him. If I did not love you so much, I should envy you the happiness of possessing so many and such excellent masters. I understand Mr Nicholas is also with you ; and that you are, with his assistance, making such prodigious progress in astronomy, as not only to know the pole-star, and the dog, and such other common constellations ; but even, with a skill that bespeaks truly accomplished astronomers, to be able to distinguish the sun from the moon. Go on then, with this new and wonderful science, by which you ascend to the stars. And, while you diligently consider them with your eyes, let this holy season of Lent remind you of the sacred hymn of Boethius, which teaches you to raise your minds also to heaven, lest, while your eyes are lifted up to the skies, your souls should grovel among the brutes. Adieu, my dearest children."

" Thomas More to his dear Children, and to Margaret Giggs, whom he numbers among his Children.

" THE merchant of Bristol brought me your letters the day after he received them from you. I need not say that I was exceedingly delighted, for nothing can come from your hands, so rude and negligent, as would not give me more satisfaction than the most laboured production from any other person. So much does my affection endear your writings to me ; but, happily, they need nothing to render them agreeable beyond their own intrinsic merit, their pleasantry and elegant Latin. There was not one of your letters which did not charm me. But, to speak sincerely, John's letter pleased me most, because it was longer than the others, and because he appeared to have written it

with more study and pains. For he has not only prettily described, and neatly expressed whatever he says, but with much pleasantry, and not a little shrewdness, retorts my jests : yet so temperately, as well as agreeably, does he manage his repartees, that he shows that he never forgets it is his father to whom he writes ; and whom he fears to offend, while he studies to amuse him. Now I expect a letter from each of you almost every day that I am absent. Neither will I have any such excuse, as the shortness of time, the hasty departure of the messenger, the want of any thing to say ; excuses which John never makes. For nobody prevents you from writing ; and, as to the messenger, may not you be beforehand with him, by having your letters always written and sealed, to wait any opportunity ? But, as to the want of matter, how can that ever take place when you write to me ?—To me, who am gratified to hear either of your studies or amusements : who shall be pleased to hear you, at great length, inform me that you have nothing at all to say ; which certainly must be a very easy task, especially for women, who are said to be always most fluent upon nothing. This, however, let me impress upon your remembrance ; that, whether you write of serious subjects, or of the merest trifles, you always write with care and attention. Nor will it be amiss, if you should first write all your letters in English, which you will afterwards translate much more successfully, and with much less fatigue, into Latin, while the mind is free from the labour of invention, and solely occupied with the expression. But, while I leave this to your own judgments, I enjoin you by all means to examine what you write with great care, before you make out a fair copy. Consider the sentences first in the order in which they are placed, and then attend minutely to their several parts. By this means you will easily discover any improper expression, into which you may have fallen ; and even after you have corrected it,

and written out a fair copy, do not account it irksome still to examine it again. For, in copying over, we are apt to fall into errors which we had already noticed and corrected. By this diligence, your trifles will, in a short time, be of importance. For as there is nothing so witty and pointed as that it may not be rendered insipid by a stupid and awkward mode of expression, so there is nothing so silly in itself, as that it may not, by skilful management, acquire a pleasant and graceful turn."

" Thomas More to Margaret, Elizabeth, Cecilia, his beloved daughters, and to Margaret Giggs, whom he loves not less than if she were his daughter by birth.

" I CANNOT express, my sweet girls, the exquisite pleasure which I received from your elegant letters. Nor am I less gratified to find, that though you are upon a tour, and frequently changing your residence, you omit none of your accustomed daily exercises. Now, indeed, I believe you love me, since you do in my absence what you know would give me the greatest pleasure if I were present. And as I see you do every thing to gratify me, it shall be my part to make your attentions profitable to yourselves. Believe me, there is nothing which more refreshes me, amidst the fatigues of business, than when I read what has been written by you. Were it not for the evidence before me, I might have suspected that your teacher was led astray by his affections, in the flattering accounts which he gave me of your proficiency. But from what you write, you induce me to believe him, though his praises of your elegance and acuteness in disputation might otherwise well exceed my faith. Therefore, I am most anxious to return home to you, that I may compare my scholar with you. He cannot believe that he will not find some exaggeration in your master's accounts. But for

my part, as I know how indefatigable you are, I have no doubt, that if you do not overcome your master himself in disputation, you will at least not give up the point. Adieu, my dearest girls."

A Letter of More to his Daughter Margaret.

" You are too timid and bashful, my dear Margaret, in asking money from a father who is desirous to give it, especially when you made me happy with a letter, every line of which I would not recompense with a piece of gold, as Alexander did those of Cherilus; but, if my power were equal to my will, I would repay every syllable with an ounce of gold. I have sent you what you asked, and would have added more, were it not so delightful to receive the requests and caresses of a daughter—of you, in particular, whom both knowledge and virtue make most dear to my soul. The sooner you spend this money, in your usual proper way, and the sooner you have recourse to me for more, the greater pleasure you will give to your father. Adieu, my beloved daughter."

APPENDIX III.

*Epitaph on the Tomb of Sir Thomas More, in the Church
of Chelsea.*

(Written by himself.)

THOMAS MORUS, urbe Londinensi, familiâ non celebri sed honestâ natus, in literis utcunque versatus; quum et causas aliquot annos juvenis egisset in foro, et in urbe suâ pro Shirevo jus dixisset; ab invictissimo rege Henrico Octavo (cui uni regum omnium gloria prius contigit, ut Fidei Defensor, qualem et gladio et calamo vere præstitit, merito vocaretur) adscitus in aulam est, delectusque in consilium; et creatus eques, Proquæstor primum, post Cancellarius Lancastriæ, tandem Angliæ, miro principis favore factus est. Sed interim in publico regni senatu, lectus est orator populi: præterea legatus regis nonnunquam fuit, alias alibi, postremo vero Cameraci comes et collega junctus principi legationis Cuthberto Tunstallo tum Londinensi, mox Dunelmensi Episcopo, quo viro vix habet orbis hodie quicquam eruditius, prudentius, melius. Ibi, inter summos orbis Christiani monarchas, rursus resecta fœdera redditamque mundo diu desideratam pacem et lætissimus vidit et legatus interfuit.

Quam superi pacem firment faxintque perennem!

In hoc officiorum vel honorum cursu, quum ita versaretur ut neque princeps optimus operam ejus improbaret, neque

nobilibus esset invisus, nec injucundus populo, furibus autem, et homicidis * molestus. Pater ejus tandem Johannes Morus, eques, et in eum judicum ordinem cooptatus, qui regius concessus vocatur; homo civilis, suavis, innocens, mitis, misericors, æquus et integer; annis quidem gravis, sed corpore plus quam pro ætate viridi, postquam eo productam sibi vitam vidit ut filium viderit Angliæ Cancellarium, satis in terra se jam moratum ratus, libens emigravit in Cælum. At filius, defuncto patre, cui quamdiu supererat comparatus, et juvenis vocari consueverat, et ipse quoque sibi videbatur, amissum jam patrem requirens, ac editos ex se liberos quatuor et nepotes undecim respiciens, apud animum suum cœpit persenescere. Auxit hunc affectum animi subsecuta statim, velut adpetentis senii signum, pectoris valetudo deterior. Itaque, mortalium harum rerum satur, quam rem, a puero pene, semper optaverat, ut ultimos aliquot annos obtineret liberos, quibus hujus vitæ negotiis paulatim se seducens, futuræ possit immortalitatem meditari, eam rem tandem (si cœptis annuat Deus) indulgentissimi principis incomparabili beneficiæ, resignatis honoribus, impetravit: atque hoc sepulchrum sibi, quod mortis eum nunquam cessantis obrepere quotidie commonefaceret, translatis huc prioris uxoris ossibus, extruendum curavit. Quod

* This blank, it is conjectured, was filled up, or intended to be filled up, with the words *hereticisque*, since More informs Erasmus that he boasted in his epitaph of his enmity to heretics. As the blank, however, is perfectly plain, and no symptom of erasure appears on the marble, it may be supposed that More, from farther reflection, rather chose to leave a space vacant for the word, than actually to inscribe it. Another explanation has been given.—We are informed, that, in the seventeenth century, the epitaph was scarcely legible, whereas at present it is perfectly distinct. Hence it is conjectured, that the whole has been repaired, probably by some descendant of More, and that, from respect to the memory of the illustrious author, no attempt has been made to retouch this obnoxious word. The perfect smoothness of the marble seems, however, to favour the former supposition.

ne superstes sibi frustra fecerit, neve ingruentem trepidus mortem horreat, sed desiderio Christi libens oppetat; mortemque ut sibi non omnino mortem sed januam vitæ feliciori inveniatur; precibus eum piis, lector optime, spirantem precor, defunctumque prosequere.

Chara Thomæ jacet hic Joanna uxorcula Mori,
Qui tumulum Aliciæ hunc destino, quique mihi.
Una mihi dedit hoc conjuncta virentibus annis,
Me vocet ut puer, et trina puella patrem.
Altera privignis, quod gloria rara novercæ est,
Tam pia quam natis vix fuit ulla suis.
Altera sic mecum vixit, sic altera vivit,
Charior incertum est quæ sit an illa fuit.
O simul, O juncti poteramus vivere nos tres
Quam bene, si fatum, religioque sinant!
At societ tumulus, societ nos obsecro cælum,
Sic mors, non potuit quod dare vita, dabit.

APPENDIX IV.

*The Earl of Sussex to Sir William Cecil.**

“ Good Mr Secretary,

“ UPON your request and promise, made in your letter of the 16th, I will write to you what by any means I conceive in this great matter ; although the greatness of the cause, in respect of the person whose it is, the inconstancy and subtleness of the people with whom we deal, and the little account made always of my simple judgment, give me good occasion of silence. And, therefore, (unless it be to the queen’s majesty, from whom I would not wish any thought of my heart to be hidden,) I look for a performance of your promise.

“ The matter must at length take end, either by finding the Scottish queen guilty of the crimes that are objected against her, or by some manner of composition, with a show of saving her honour. The first, I think, will hardly be attempted, for two causes. The one, for that if her adverse party accuse her of the murder, by producing of her letters, she will deny them, and accuse the most of them of manifest consent to the murder, hardly to be denied ; so as, upon the trial on both sides, her proofs will judicially fall

* This letter was written a few months after Mary’s confinement in England ; and the writer was, at the time, employed as one of the Commissioners at York, to investigate the charges against her.

best out, it is thought. The other, for that their young king is of tender and weak years, and state of body; and, if God should call him, and their queen were judicially defaced and dishonoured, and her son, in respect of her wickedness, admitted to the crown, Hamilton, upon his death, should succeed; which, as Murray's faction utterly detest, so, after her public defamation, they dare not, to avoid Hamilton, receive her again, for fear of revenge. And, therefore, to avoid these great perils, they surely intend, so far as I can by any means discover, to labour a composition, wherein Lyddington was a dealer here, hath, by means, dealt with the Scottish queen, and will also, I think, deal there. And to that end I believe you shall shortly hear of Melvil there, who, I think, is the instrument between Murray, Lyddington, and their queen, to work this composition; whereunto I think surely both parties do incline, although diversely affected for private respects.

"The Earl of Murray and his faction work that their queen would now willingly surrender to her son, after the example of Navarre; and procure the confirming of the regency in Murray; and therewith admit Hamilton and his faction to place of council, according to their states; and to remain in England herself, with her dowry of France; whereunto, I think, they would add a portion out of Scotland. And if she would agree to this, I think they would not only forbear to touch her in honour, but also deliver to her all matters that they have to charge her, and denounce her clear by parliament, and therewith put her in hope, not only to receive her again to her royal estate if her son die, but also upon some proof of the forgetting of her displeasure, to procure in short time, that she may be restored in her son's life, and he to give place to her for life: and if she will not surrender, it is thought Murray will allow of her restitution, and abode in England, so as he may continue regent. The Ha-

miltons seek that the young king's authority should be disannulled ; the hurts done on either side recompensed ; and the queen restored to her crown, and to remain in Scotland. And yet, in respect of her misgovernment, they are contented that she should be governed by a council of the nobility of that realm, to be appointed here ; in which council there should be no superior in authority or place appointed, but that every nobleman should hold his place according to his state ; and that the queen's majesty should compose all differences, from time to time, amongst them. And to avoid all difference and peril, their queen should have certain houses of no force ; and a portion to maintain her estate : and the castles of Edinburgh, Stirling, and Dunbar, and other principal forts of the realm, to be delivered into the hands of upright noblemen, that leaned to no faction, to be sworn to hold them in sort to be prescribed ; and that the whole nobility of Scotland should swear amity, and should testify the same under their hands and seals : and that the queen's majesty should take assurance for performance ; and have the bringing up of the young prince in England, by nobility of England or Scotland, at her appointment. And, so as this might take effect, I think they might easily be induced to consent their queen should also remain in England, and have her dowry out of France, and a portion out of Scotland, to maintain her state and her son's, in places to be appointed by the queen's majesty.

“ Thus do you see how these two factions, for their private causes, toss between them, the crown and public affairs of Scotland, and how near they be to agree, if their private causes were not ; and care neither for the mother, nor the child, (as I think, before God,) but to serve their own turns. Neither will Murray like of any order whereby he should not be regent styled ; nor Hamilton of any order whereby he should not be as great, or greater, in government than Mur-

ray. So as the government is presently the matter, whatsoever they say was heretofore the cause; and, therefore, it will be good we forget not our part in this tragedy.

“The opinion for the title to the crown, after the death of their queen and her son, is diversely carried, as the parties be affected to these two factions. The Hamiltons affirm the Duke of Chatelherault to be the next heir by the laws. The other faction say, that the young king, by his coronation, and mother’s surrender, is rightfully invested of the crown of Scotland; whereby his next heir in blood is, by the laws, next heir also to the crown; and thereby the duke avoided. The fear of this decree maketh Hamilton to withstand the king’s title, for the surety of his own, and the regency of Murray, in respect of his claim to be governor, as next heir to the crown; for which causes it is likely Hamilton will hardly yield to the one or the other. And yet, James Macgill, an assured man to Morton, talks with me secretly of this matter; and, defending the right of the Earl of Lennox’s son, as next heir, in blood, to the young king, confessed to me that he thought, because it came by the mother, it must return by the mother’s side, which was Hamilton; but it would put many men on horseback before it were performed; whereby you may see what leadeth in Scotland. There is some secret envy between Lyddington and Macgill; and, as I think, if they agree not by the way, you shall find Lyddington wholly bent to composition, and Macgill, of himself, otherwise inclined. If the queen’s majesty would assure their defence, you may deal with them as you see cause.

“Thus far of that I have gathered by them; wherein, if they do not alter, I am sure I do not err. And now, touching my opinion of the matter, (not by way of advice, but as imparting to you what I conceive,) I think surely no end can be made good for England, except the person of the

Scottish queen be detained, by one means or other, in England. Of the two ends before written, I think to be best in all respects for the queen's majesty, if Murray will produce such matter as that the queen's majesty may, by virtue of her superiority over Scotland, find judicially the Scottish queen guilty of the murder of her husband, and therewith detain her in England, at the charges of Scotland, and allow of the crowning of the young king, and regency of Murray. Whereunto, if Hamilton will submit himself, it were well done, for avoiding of his dependency upon France to receive him, with provision for indemnity of his title; and if he will not, then to assist Murray to prosecute him and his adherents by confiscation, &c. If this will not fall out sufficiently, (as I doubt it will not,) to determine judicially, if she deny her letters; then surely I think it best to proceed by composition, without show of any meaning to proceed to trial. And herein, as it shall be the surest way for the queen's majesty to procure the Scottish queen to surrender, &c. if that may be brought to pass; so, if she will by no means be induced to surrender, and will not end except she may be in some degree restored, then I think it fit to consider therein these matters following:

"First, To provide for her and her son, to remain in England, at the charges of Scotland.

"Secondly, To maintain in strength and authority Murray's faction, as much as may be, so as they oppress not unjustly Hamilton.

"Thirdly, To compose the causes between Murray and Hamilton, and their adherents, and to provide for Hamilton's indemnity in the matter of the title, to avoid his dependency upon France.

"Fourthly, That the queen's majesty order all differences that shall arise in Scotland; and to that end, have security on both sides.

" Fifthly, If Hamilton will wilfully dissent from order, it is better to assist Murray in the prosecuting of Hamilton by confiscation, although he flee therefore to France, than to put Murray any ways in peril of weakening.

" And lastly, To foresee that these Scots on both sides pack not together, so as to unwrap (under colour of this composition) their mistress out of all present slander, purge her openly, show themselves satisfied with her abode here, and, within short time after, either by reconciliation or the death of this child, join together to demand of the queen the delivery home of their queen to govern her own realm, she also making the like request; and then the queen, having no just cause to detain her, be bound in honour to restore her unto her realm, and for matters that in this time shall pass, have her a mortal enemy for ever after. And thus, ceasing to trouble you any farther, I wish to you as to myself.

" Yours, most assured,

" T. SUSSEX.

" *From York, the XXII. October, 1568.*"

Secretary Cecil's Deliberation concerning Scotland, December 21, 1568.

THE best way for England, but not the easiest, that the Queen of Scots might remain deprived of her crown, and the state continue as it is.

The second way for England profitable, and not so hard.— That the Queen of Scots might be induced, by some persuasions, to agree that her son might continue king, because he is crowned, and herself to also remain queen; and that the government of the realm might be committed to such persons as the Queen of England should name, so as, for the nomination of them, it might be ordered that a convenient

number of persons of Scotland should be first named to the Queen of England, indifferently for the Queen of Scots, and for her son ; that is to say, the one half by the Queen of Scots, and the other by the Earl of Lennox and Lady Lemon, parents to the child ; and out of those, the queen's majesty of England to make choice for all the offices of the realm, that are, by the laws of Scotland, disposable by the king or queen of the land.

That until this may be done by the queen's majesty, the government remain in the hands of the Earl of Murray, as it is, providing he shall not dispose of any offices or perpetuals to continue any longer than to these offered of the premises.

That a parliament be summoned in Scotland by several commandments, both of the Queen of Scots and of the young king.

That hostages be delivered unto England, on the young king's behalf, to the number of twelve persons of the Earl of Murray's party, as the Queen of Scots shall name ; and likewise on the queen's behalf, to the like number, as the Earl of Murray shall name ; the same not to be any that have, by inheritance or office, cause to be in this parliament, to remain from the beginning of the summons of that parliament, until three months after that parliament ; which hostages shall be pledges, that the friends of either part shall keep the peace in all cases, till, by this parliament, it be concluded, that the ordinance which the Queen of England shall devise for the government of the realm, (being not to the hurt of the crown of Scotland, nor contrary to the laws of Scotland for any man's inheritance, as the same was before the parliament at Edinburgh, in December 1567,) shall be established, to be kept and obeyed, under pain of high treason for the breakers thereof.

That by the same parliament also be established all exe-

cutions and judgments, given against any person to the death of the late king.

That by the same parliament, a remission be made universally from the Queen of Scots to any her contraries, and also from every one subject to another, saving that restitution be made of lands and houses, and all other things heritable, that have been, by either side, taken from them which were the owners thereof, at the committing of the Queen of Scots to Lochleven.

That by the same parliament it be declared, who shall be successors to the crown, next after the Queen of Scots and her issue ; or else, that such right as the Duke of Chatelherault had, at the marriage of the Queen of Scots with the Lord Darnley, may be conserved and not prejudiced.

That the Queen of Scots may have leave of the queen's majesty of England twelve months after the said parliament, and that she shall not depart out of England, without special licence of the queen's majesty.

That the young king shall be nourished and brought up in England, till he be years of age.

It is to be considered, that, in this case, the composition between the queen and her subjects may be made with certain articles, outwardly to be seen to the world, for her honour, as though all the parts should come of her, and yet, for the surety of contraries, that certain betwixt her and the queen's majesty are to be included.

APPENDIX V.

Lord Burleigh's Advices to his Son, Robert Cecil.

SON ROBERT,

THE virtuous inclinations of thy matchless mother, by whose tender and godly care thy infancy was governed; together with thy education under so zealous and excellent a tutor; puts me in rather assurance than hope, that thou art not ignorant of that *summum bonum*, which is only able to make thee happy as well in thy death as in thy life; I mean, the true knowledge and worship of thy Creator and Redeemer; without which, all other things are vain and miserable. So that thy youth being guided by so sufficient a teacher, I make no doubt that he will furnish thy life with divine and moral documents. Yet, that I may not cast off the care be seeming a parent towards his child; or that thou shouldest have cause to derive thy whole felicity and welfare rather from others than from whence thou receivedst thy breath and being; I think it fit and agreeable to the affection I bear thee, to help thee with such rules and advertisements for the squaring of thy life, as are rather gained by experience than by much reading. To the end, that entering into this exorbitant age, thou mayest be the better prepared to shun those scandalous courses whereunto the world, and the lack of experience, may easily draw thee. And because I will not confound thy memory,

I have reduced them into ten precepts ; and, next unto Moses' Tables, if thou imprint them in thy mind, thou shalt reap the benefit, and I the content. And they are these following :

I. When it shall please God to bring thee to man's estate, use great providence and circumspection in chusing thy wife ; for from thence will spring all thy future good or evil. And it is an action of thy life, like unto a stratagem of war ; whersin a man can err but once. If thy estate be good, match near home and at leisure ; if weak, far off and quickly. Inquire diligently of her disposition, and how her parents have been inclined in their youth. Let her not be poor, how generous * soever ; for a man can buy nothing in the market with gentility. Nor chuse a base and uncomely creature altogether for wealth ; for it will cause contempt in others and loathing in thee. Neither make choice of a dwarf or a fool ; for by the one thou shalt beget a race of pigmies ; the other will be thy continual disgrace ; and it will yirke † thee to hear her talk. For thou shalt find it to thy great grief, that there is nothing more fulsome ‡ than a she-fool.

And touching the guiding of thy house, let thy hospitality be moderate ; and, according to the means of thy estate, rather plentiful than sparing, but not costly ; for I never knew any man grow poor by keeping an orderly table. But some consume themselves through secret vices, and their hospitality bears the blame. But banish swinish drunkards out of thine house, which is a vice impairing health, consuming much, and makes no show. I never heard praise ascribed to the drunkard, but the well-bearing his drink ; which is a better commendation for a brewer's horse or a grayman, than for either a gentleman or a serving-man. Beware thou

* i. e. Well-born.

† i. e. Ink.

‡ i. e. Disgusting.

VI. Undertake no suit against a poor man with receiving * much wrong; for, besides that thou makeest him thy compeer, it is a base conquest to triumph where there is small resistance. Neither attempt law against any man, before thou be fully resolved that thou hast right on thy side: and then spare not for either money or pains. For a cause or two so followed and obtained, will free thee from suits a great part of thy life.

VII. Be sure to keep some great man thy friend, but trouble him not for trifles. Compliment him often with many, yet small gifts, and of little charge. And if thou hast cause to bestow any great gratuity, let it be something which may be daily in sight. Otherwise, in this ambitious age, thou shalt remain like a hop without a pole; live in obscurity, and be made a foot-ball for every insulting companion to spurn at.

VIII. Towards thy superiors be humble, yet generous. † With thine equals familiar, yet respective. Towards thine inferiors show much humanity, and some familiarity: as to bow the body; stretch forth the hand; and to uncover the head: with such like popular compliments. The first prepares thy way to advancement. The second makes thee known for a man well bred. The third gains a good report; which, once got, is easily kept. For right humanity takes such deep root in the minds of the multitude, as they are more easily gained by unprofitable curtesies, than by churlish benefits. Yet I advise thee not to affect, or neglect, popularity too much. Seek not to be Essex: shun to be Raleigh. ‡

IX. Trust not any man with thy life, credit, or estate. For it is mere folly for a man to enthrall himself to his friend,

* *i. e.* Though you receive.

† *i. e.* Not mean.

‡ Essex was the idol of the people: his rival, Raleigh, their aversion, till

as though, occasion being offered, he should not dare to become an enemy.

X. Be not scurrilous in conversation, nor satirical in thy jests. The one will make thee unwelcome to all company ; the other pull on quarrels, and get the hatred of thy best friends. For suspicious jests, when any of them savour of truth, leave a bitterness in the minds of those which are touched. And, albeit I have already pointed at this inclusively, yet I think it necessary to leave it to thee as a special caution ; because I have seen many so prone to quip and gird, * as they would rather lose their friend than their jest. And if perchance their boiling brain yield a quaint scoff, they will travel to be delivered of it as a woman with child. These nimble fancies are but the froth of wit.

his undeserved misfortunes attracted their compassion, and his heroism their applause.

• Mock and jibe.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

